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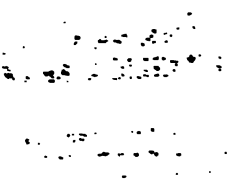
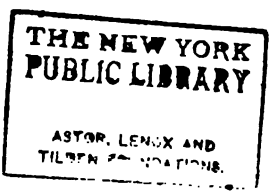
MOTHER EARTH

by

FRANCES HARROD

Mother Earth

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Mother Earth

A Sentimental Co[illegible]

Frances Harrod

Mother Earth

A Sentimental Comedy

BY

Frances Harrod

(FRANCES FORBES-ROBERTSON)

Author of "The Potentate," "Odd Stories," "The Hidden Model," "The Devil's Pronoun."

NEW YORK

J. F. Taylor & Company

MCMII

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To

my brother

JOHNSTON FORBES-ROBERTSON

and his wife

GERTRUDE

I affectionately dedicate

this book.

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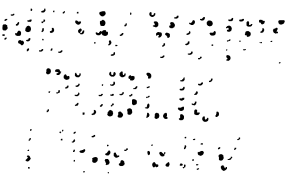

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Mother Earth

I.

THEY were in a three-cornered field on the slope of a hill, a wedge of gold cut into the green hills rising above it. In the rich afternoon light the dress of Lady Anne, which was in fact black, made a purple patch, while her companion's brown suit merely became an emphasis—a deeper note of the surrounding gold, the shadow of so much colour, as it were, thrown down on an unexpected spot. A half-finished haystack faced them—he had been piling it up, the earliest hay of the year, and had fallen into the idle talk that follows manual labour at rest time; and then it was that a queer sense had come over them both, sweeping from one

to the other backward and forward as they talked, and which continued to press upon them from that moment for many months, a sense of dissatisfaction, of the presence of an *if*—some idea of beginning anew, of fulfilling more completely the ideal of their life by an effort. Change, like a person, seemed actually to hover about them, but miserably invisible. Not to go away from the life they were leading but to start afresh, somehow, was vaguely the notion that possessed them both, as their eyes rested on the beloved lands stretching out before them, rested all the time as they talked, for they had hardly looked at one another, a view that suggested almost a visible silence covering it: the world in repose, as if the intimate places knew of a scheme on hand, and paused to throw out their luring charm in the between time. On the other side of the haystack, to the right, a path led through a gate to an orchard and from thence across a stream, a

very narrow stream, to the lawns of the low-lying manor house. Beyond that was the sea, a blue ribbon-like line behind the fir trees which formed a solitary group extending a certain distance across the open pastures, land which was cultivated evidently for miles around by petty farmers whose dwelling houses seemed smaller than their cattle-sheds, all whitewashed dwellings, pierced with not very much more than holes for windows, and situated in the hollows: here and there chimneys only were visible between the long curves of the sweeping plains. The private estate, with its wire fencing and lodges and desolate air of silence and gentility, was nowhere seen. The folk in the lanes or on the open paths were the people of the soil, the peasants, and they talked in a musical tongue to one another, in unrestrained accents, from hillside to hillside if needs be: a thrifty race, yet capable of lavishness when a kind act was in the question or even a holiday.

Their queer little white villages or gray towns put up shutters for many a local reason that would seem inadequate enough to tradesmen of ordinary cities.

Trevor Griffiths and his sister did not lack the country's characteristics. Frankly economical in trivial matters which concerned merely the appearances of things, they were yet generous in giving to the needy or in starting some scheme that might have fun in it for any one who had the will to make a real *to do* for the nonce in their fêteing. The dignity of their house—traditions of a great family, a pedigree that went back step by step through centuries, touching kings and queens in the shadowy past, and the great of the world in every generation,—seemed to annul sordid circumstances: a wonderful procession of men and women had preceded which left a hereditary trait in their descendants of instinctive pride: the dignity of the whole race was a fact that

shabby clothes and a scantily replenished purse could not gainsay.

Trevor Griffiths had an absurdly small income over and above the possession of some few acres of land. He dressed like a farm-hand, worked with the farm-hands in cordial intimacy, and remained a gentleman, having inherited the physical and moral instincts of countless ancestors accustomed to the best the world has to give, and the practice of courtly reticencies that go far to make animal man something better than animal beast if he neglects not Mother Earth.

In this last male of his race a love actually for the soil, and for a life led close down with her, was an instinct that seemed to have awakened in him to retrieve his stock at any rate from the dangers of decadence; from the fatal predominance of the spirit over the flesh, teaching the flesh evil ways. Nature too had endowed him with a powerful physique and brains enough. He had taken

medals at Cambridge over the heads of the best, and with ease. His seniors talked to him of a possible brilliant career. He received the suggestion with a twinkle of humour. What should I do in that *galère*? his reception of it suggested; a mixture of contempt, amusement, and indifference. A satirical phrase from him suddenly belittled all the enviable posts, revealed the tinsel of crowns, the hasty polishing of hats and boots and other tricks to impose upon a credulous world; while digging and the sowing of seed and the rearing of cattle assumed gigantic importance. Cornfields flashed before the vision of his listeners, literally golden, and the country Arcady to him who willed it. I have no ambition, he explained, but to live pleasantly with Mother Earth. To me the hasty rest of you, tearing on to goals you either never attain, or find hardly worth keeping, suggest butterflies fluttering after bubbles. The things by the way are more worth

while. Nevertheless he carried off honours over the heads of his companions (among others a medal not taken at his college since the days of poet Coleridge), and returned in the vacation to the manor house to dig, or cart in the hay and shepherd the stray cattle. One met him in the narrow lanes with pitch-fork on his shoulder accompanying the piled-up hay-cart, the great drowsy horses walking a slow pace in the heat of the day. Impossible to imagine him at first view any different from his comrades to whom now and then he turned and spoke in their own tongue: a stalwart figure roughly dressed with an old shapeless hat of soft felt bent systematically down all around like an inverted teacup, and yet not unlike the Greek cap found sculptured in the ancient marbles of men similarly a-harvesting. He has a black beard tending to a point that separates in two curves, gray, reposeful eyes, a little prominent and so dark they seem black, and straight features—the

nostrils sensitive. After all one must watch him as he passes, realise that he is not quite like the peasant, and wonder. An immense brain is under the tumbled hat.

"It is a miserable matter if we must part with the fields on the hill. Prices are deplorably low and our stuff this year might just as well not have been there," said Lady Anne.

"That other manure—" said Trevor.

"Ah! well that was expensive. What we had might have done—it has done before. It was a bad year."

"For us only."

"Do you think we are incompetent?"

Trevor looked up at his sister quickly. It was on his tongue to say—what nonsense! but he saw in her look that she did not mean the question more than as a kind of pathetic assertion that things were going wrong. Nevertheless he took her challenge.

"We have been entirely incompetent with

regard to making money by the farm. . . . I have never wanted to make money." . . . He paused and then added, "I have wanted to succeed with the farm, which after all is the same thing I suppose. . . . We must make a change."

"How?"

He stared before him for a long time. "If only I had more hands."

"Well!"

"It is endless what one can do with the earth. It gives us so much for such a little trouble,—but we wear it out: we sweat it. It has its revenge—it turns upon us and leaves us poor." He got up and continued to pile up the hay. A boy had come to the work, and stood on top of the stack cramming the armsful down as they came swinging up on the pitchfork.

"But how to get more hands?" said Lady Anne.

"With sacrifices we might," he said.

"More to the left!" he called out suddenly in the Celtic tongue to the boy above. The boy's accents came back stifled through the hay. Trevor threw down the fork and climbed to the top. Lady Anne looked wistfully up. She remembered climbing to the top as a child and lying, heels lifted, with Trevor in the warm delicious hay. Every summer at hay making time this desire came over her—to rush the hay stack; the temptation always came and she always looked behind it with a little laugh to find herself old—the thing would not yield its delights to her. She experienced sufficient pleasure however in the temptation.

II.

LADY ANNE RESTON was some years the senior of her brother. She was a queer and delightful creature who wore shabby clothes too, of a certain elegant fashion, and busied herself with him over the farm. She had been known to milk the cows when hands had been short, and to send our scholar, milk-pail in hand, the rounds. The thing faces us more distinctly as a fact in that it seems so impossible. He went the rounds and waited at each door for the jug to be brought and the measure given. They lived together in mutual good-fellowship and in humourous tolerance of one another's foibles. She dominated him by her excellent reasonableness. He found her wise as a witch. The Cymro believes in the sagacity of his women, secretly holds them a little bit in awe, is willing to propi-

tiate: something left perhaps more alive in him of the old instinct to seek counsel of the sorceress, believing it supernatural or infernal after all only because it was so wise; and at times suspecting something of the seer in those of his household, or in the wild bright-eyed child he wooes so young. This, that remains respect, and that so wonderfully rises at last above so much disrespect, is deservedly enough given to the woman of the North. A natural creature who transgresses with lifted head, and mothers man in the *realer* sense. They have been found to be wise shepherds with divine gifts. Lady Anne seemed to look wisdom from prominent eyes that were the colour of the sea, looked that which is so eminently woman in the witch and yet means nothing of weakness. She had deep creases in unwrinkled cheeks, generous folds marking thought in the forehead, and indications about the full mouth of a reserved humour. Her hair was

hardly gray: there were masses of it, and her hands were large and white and beautiful. With her brother she loved the earth, but something of the world too, or had in the past. "I like the hubbub of its going round," she said, "he doesn't—not a bit—he likes it flat"—which meant that she had once been beautifully young, flashing, a high-stepper: lovers in plenty she had surely had, but mocked them for a certainty. Her mother's second marriage to the father of Trevor, a poor gentleman who conceived his lineage to be a matter of greater dignity than her title, disturbed Lady Anne, then only a child: upset her sense of order. Two husbands! Two papas! Such a state of affairs was unthinkable. It seemed a makeshift for happiness, a throwing away of memories: and surely expressed a poor belief in immortality. The child's sense of a future life was very lively; moreover, she

had an abundance of that capacity for reasoning and directly moralising, so characteristic of young children, and so considerably more developed in them than we can realise. Their inability to express themselves, and shyness in them, a kind of fearful reticence caused by the belief that anyhow the grown-up know all about everything and are inclined to mock, successfully keep from us the quickening development of their minds, storehouses sometimes of amazing enough dreams and severe enough judgments.

However, disapproval grew shadowy when the little Trevor came into the world seemingly wholly for her. The unhappy mother died at his birth, and some years afterwards the father, whom she never quite got to know as that. They were mothered by an aristocratic aunt who dwelt in an old place dating back to the Restoration, thus far at any rate its newest parts, and planted

in the heart of the hills, with a still lake close up to its windows, and the story of a ghost about its remoter rooms. From there he went to school, and college at last; she to be presented, and to dance some years of her youth in the gay city. He was only at school then. At his coming of age she returned to live with him in the rather poverty-stricken manor house. They had not seen much of one another in the between time. The meeting, on the first day, sent their thoughts spinning back to childish days.

The old place then was theirs! It was small, beautiful enough, with the charming fragrance of all old manor houses descended a little in importance—a farmhouse at last with perhaps a hundred acres left of the original estate. They were to be poor together here, and neither minded the thought; yet with the little money he had, and the great store of knowledge, his honours and birth, most careers were open

to him. The boy had not hesitated. There were beautiful lands that were his. There was only one way to keep them: he must work them himself. To him the thought was invigourating and Lady Anne understood, as she watched him turn his head from the papers and documents concerning the estate and his heritage, the moment he realised how poor they were, and look across the room to the many-paned windows through which a vista of emerald grass was visible, that to play the squire or the gentleman farmer was not for a moment in his thoughts. She laughed under her breath and morally turned up her sleeves.

There were a few neighbours of genteel breeding who duly gossiped of his affairs when he ultimately left Oxford a year later and settled at Glandon. But their houses were far between. Any effects of the gossip were lost on the homeward journey and remained a remembrance of a happy day

spent in some one else's garden, where they had rearranged their little world in great excitement, praised some and anathematised others in polite ejaculations for the passing of the hour. There were a few county families with beautiful places from whence a faint echo of the world's doings penetrated this green land actually locked by hills, and girdled beyond by the sea. Fashions were set there, fortunately ignored by the peasants who kept to their shawls. Lady Anne occasionally turned the back of her hat to the front, a slight concession to the exigencies of a modish class to whom after all she belonged.

Ten years passed over the days of their youth. Lady Anne did not look much older. She was still extraordinarily active, still at times watched her brother, a curve of humour breaking the lines about her large mouth as she continued to perceive and wonder at the strange detachment in

him from those things that to most men were paramount in their notions of the necessary, and which would assuredly take him from herself. He lived so amazingly in the present, so happily in the present, that their strained income—those years had not proved profitable—affected him not at all. Nevertheless Glandon took upon itself a shabby face: dilapidation increasing for years seemed to become suddenly omnipresent, a protest, as it were, from the old walls that its clothes were shabby everywhere. The place was not liveable in. The spreading lawns, too, had been neglected, the gravel paths were no longer trim, and the service, performed entirely by an old housekeeper, and two young girls, had become careless. Honest folk these three who could work well if needs be. Lady Anne found it difficult to admonish, and indeed would apologise to them when things went particularly awry. "You have so

much to do—we must see how we can manage," and actually this time her sleeves went up. But in spite of all things it was a cheery household. The "County" would occasionally drive up, feathers and footmen resplendent, and Lady Anne would have *her* gossip of the world citywards: the flighty doings of cousins at court, and their modern audacity of vying with men in the sowing of wild oats while doing fine enough work in their way. She found the present naughty young woman an immense improvement upon the poor humbled thing of the past century possessed of the notion that to have once broken unbearable bonds meant she must be a penitent person to be kicked, or worse still patronised by philistine inferiors for the rest of her unhappy life. "They are a much finer breed," she said and twinkled.

III.

SHE walked away now through the little gate into the orchard, then down the winding path to the stream. The trees were low and sprawling, sprawling one way, as if in effort to escape the winds from the sea; they were all of equal height, the same winds having cut their tips, tidied their mops as it were, giving a look of unity to their mingling foliage that became a dense green silhouetted against the blue sea and sky. Certain rabbits scurried to their holes as she passed, others, wiser than their fellows in the prescience which tells who is likely to be an enemy and who not, merely ceased to nibble, watching the swish of her black skirts as they touched the grass.

At the stream, a streak of shallow clear water with wide flat stepping-stones across,

she encountered Margaret Hughes, who had come up the little path by it; a way that led from the village below to the well from which the cottagers and even the more important houses obtained their water. She lived in the village in a small house with her mother. She looked twenty-five, she was in fact nearer thirty. Not tall, a square figure with wide shoulders, one noticed at once the general sense of width in her that meant strength both moral and physical. Her hands were wide, her forehead, and the heart of her and the brain of her. Her brown eyes were far apart and had in them a slightly startled look at times, like that of a child taken in surprise, but the lids would sweep down, and the look was gone, and one of quiet, steadfast helpfulness remained. Her hair was wavy, and had the appearance of being short, growing beautifully about the ears. She was not beautiful, but beautifully plain. The angles of her

person suggested knottiness, as in the branches of an oak. Her skin was freckled and sunburned, but as white as milk beneath her collar; her cheeks had a red that came and went and deepened in tone as she spoke. In her walk she gave a movement now and then like a lurch, a movement that struck one as caused by a mental attitude rather than a physical one, a kind of beginning again, a throwing off of tiresomeness: a facing that required a physical effort, but was, nevertheless, a moral facing. She wore very simple clothes, one hardly noticed what they were, they were at any rate what people wore, neither markedly fashionable nor markedly out of date.

Lady Anne stopped and greeted her without smiling. They were evidently sufficiently intimate, sufficiently often meeting to obviate the necessity of ceremony. Shaking hands, moreover, was a rare act with the inhabitants of this green isolated county of

Britain. The peasants and gentry were constantly connected. The farmers counting cousins among the better families. The shopkeepers in the small towns were relatives again of the farmers. They did not mix; very little intimacy except for gossip on the road existed. No equivalent of the Scottish clanship and hospitality was discernible among them. On the contrary, they had a steadfast determination not to betray one another's cousinship; an amazing natural sense of the dues to position; an instinct of snobbishness which could anticipate a future self-aggrandisement when there would be little keenness for reminders of whence they had come. They were all, of course, descendants of kings, they were also cousins, but some were "quality" and some were not, and they drew the distinction in a mutual stand-offishness. They were perhaps the most reticent race in the world, and with that the most immoral, as we count

bushes, and crimson foxglove, and white and golden lilies, and primroses scattered the highways and byways and crept into the fields; the most vagrant making a bed upon the cottage roofs, peeping out in the spring, as if such a place were quite the conventional cradle for such younglings; for Mother Earth, like poor Margaret Hughes, presses her ideals into her flora, and will out with them even when there are no gardeners. There were no gardeners. Men sometimes worked at digging and planting, but they did that or any other kind of work, and were not called upon to belittle their capacities by laying claim to any special craft as theirs. What was wanted, that thing they did, with an immense assumption of knowledge and no shame at failure.

"You were coming to us," said Lady Anne.

"Yes—I see you are getting hay in already."

"Just that field—it catches all the sun and burns too dry if we leave it long—Trevor is at it now."

Margaret looked over her shoulder. "How he loves it."

Lady Anne stopped and looked back too. "Yes, I suppose that's it, that is the mistake."

"What mistake?"

"He doesn't make money."

"Because he loves just the work?"

"He dallies! The farm is his spoiled child—he scorns monetary results—consequently, he is careless."

"It is always money then—even in delving?"

"Potatoes are no good unless they are good to eat."

"But there need not be so many more than enough to eat. There need not be enough to sell, for instance."

"There must be enough to sow again,

enough to put on the market to procure the value of manure."

"Mercy!" said Margaret. She gave the peculiar little movement in her walk which seemed to serve as a kind of full stop to any subject one might be discussing; her eyes wandered over the view in front of them which was spreading out now in rising lawns towards the house, everything tender and clear in the east light at sunset. "How still it is," she said.

"He's an amateur," went on Lady Anne.

The word conjured up to Margaret, Paris —the studio, the confident, egotistical students, so charming in their noisy way of being serious, so energetic in the breaking of laws and the laying down of laws and the turning up of their noses, a kind of grand sniffing at everything on earth but the particular movement of the moment, the particular God of their young hearts. An Amateur! How despicable—Ah! but the true Amateur!

What did the word mean after all? To be truly an Amateur was to be truly great, and their young heads had wagged. The emotion of it all, so seldom called up now, swept over Margaret, and she turned and said with some humour.

"Ah! but he is the true Amateur!"

"Amateurs are no good," answered Lady Anne quite seriously. "The great or the insignificant. They do not realise the unity of things—that everything is for the sake of everything else: nothing is for its own sake. The egoist is a self-deluding absurdity. He's a bad cabbage," she ended, "but he was meant to be a cabbage all the same. Isolation is a physical impossibility and a moral one too, that is why life is interesting."

"I believe you are lecturing me," said Margaret.

"I remember," continued the good lady with the edge of a smile, "when I was quite

young there was a soldier, just like a thing out of a box of toys. I saw him on parade —he was immense and on an immense horse. My heart of course beat a great deal quicker than was sensible—it wasn't for the love of beating. Well, he came and wooed, as was quite proper and ordinary. I thought it extraordinary—he was so splendid—to look at. One day old sayings came up in general conversation. He quoted for my benefit, '*Nothing new, nothing true, nothing signifies.*' I flung back at him, *Nothing new, some things true, all things signify.* He rode away of course—the '*signify*' was portentous, but it saved the situation, and the thought remained with me. Well, all of us some time during our life find our own particular little philosophy. That was mine: it made life extraordinarily interesting."

"Even here?" The girl's thoughts were still in Paris, spying through memories to an

imaginary present made of the past, so desirable that she lingered to watch, and put the question to her companion at the leap back to her own world, at the shock of the contact as she touched ground.

"More here than anywhere. The great world is a much duller place than you imagine; a little bit of it is good for us all—to see the merry-go-round before the same horse, the same chariot, appears again and again——"

"But we who have only seen the half round—" she laughed, and then said suddenly, as if the picture of the great world had brought it to her mind, "Mona is let."

Lady Anne stopped in her walk and looked incredulously at her companion, Mona lodge had been empty so long, and so long a landmark of their real seclusion, their real remoteness from the World, that every one had ceased to wonder if it ever would be tenanted again.

"Who has taken it?"

"Your merry-go-round kind of people, I should think."

"Well?"

"Horses and carriages and the rest."

"That's not very informing."

"An American with his daughter. He has fallen a victim to the charms of our dulness; he says our island is one of the most beautiful in the world, and that there is gold in our mines. He has taken Mona for two years."

"Has he come for gold, do you suppose?"

"He is immensely rich."

"Ah! then he has surely come for the gold. It is only poor people who let gold lie."

"It is only the rich who can afford to raise it."

"Precisely, that is the whole ridiculous wrong in economics."

"Lady Lenham has called."

"Ah, they own the mine land! Still it was a long drive."

Margaret laughed. "They say he is—" she hesitated.

"What?"

"Not quite——"

"Not a gentleman I suppose."

"Something like that, but that his daughter is charming and——"

"An heiress?"

"Yes. You know," continued Margaret after a pause. "I am excitedly interested."

"In what?"

"The idea. A young, a beautiful girl, so rich, who is common by birth."

"Why should her commonness be interesting?"

"Because common people when brought up with the same advantages as those of gentler birth are so often interesting."

"I have always found the parvenu detestable," said Lady Anne deliberately.

"That's better than being nothing; they are detestable or they are charming."

"They have bad manners and are quarrelsome."

"Not always—it is when they are not that they are so charming. They have been in closer touch with Mother Earth. They can be greatly compassionate, greatly tender, even though they quarrel violently."

"You speak of peasants—they can be hideously cruel."

"I speak of parvenus, who are the exceptional peasants; the peasant with brains, not the degraded slave we are inclined to think of as a peasant——"

"Margaret, you talk nonsense. Parvenus are successful shopkeepers or money-lenders, or criminal financiers or pig-stickers, jerry builders, and sweaters."

"I dare say, but their mothers and sisters

and aunts and cousins are people who have worked and suffered, and their children are of that blood; and then there are the other parvenus: the poets and the painters and philosophers, the soldiers and lawyers, the statesmen and the priests——"

"You leave us nothing," said Lady Anne.

"Oh, yes! so much, so much; your admirable manners, your determined tolerance, your form, your beautiful society for which all the rest is done—the pageantry!—Aristocracy makes democracy possible; good manners, civilisation."

"I shall turn Trevor on to you."

"Trevor—how can he know? He is an aristocrat playing at being a peasant; he is never so well mannered as when most menial. He is magnificent, always magnificent—he is not of us——"

Lady Anne looked at her companion. "You pretend to be?"

"My father was a parvenu."

The elder woman laughed. "Then you are no judge—anyway you libel him."

Margaret coloured, "They meet in me," she said ambiguously, "I am cut off, you see, neither one nor the other. Aesthetically I love the one, humanely I love the other."

They had reached the house. They entered a door which led at once into a large sitting-room, an immense hall turned into that. It was comfortable and queer and shabby. There were a great many things about, things accumulated with time and in no sense ornamental. There were cushions with plaid covers, and heavy immovable chairs with faded upholstering of green damask. Tea was served on a small table near an immense fireplace. The dining-room led out from one side of the room through solid oak double doors, a drawing-room and other rooms through an arch past the staircase at the back, a small hall between, being curtained off. The curtains were of

cream damask like old ivory, more creamy for wear, with a conventional fleur-de-lis pattern upon them, a remaining note in the old place of seignorial days.

Trevor came in as they sat at tea. He smiled on seeing Margaret. "Ah! Miss Margaret, we want you to come and help us paint the house."

"Let's," said Margaret.

"Anne says we are shabby."

Margaret scanned the room. "Isn't that what you like?"

"Anne wants a change, what are we to do with her?"

"And you?" the girl's eyes were fixed on him in the deepening twilight, she looked pale, as if an unbearable idea had caught at her mind; he thought it was the light that gave the aspect; at the same time a vague sense pressed upon his consciousness that she was frightened by this idea of change, and that she was waiting for him to dispel some anxiety which held her.

IV.

NOT verylong after this a carriage stopped before the door of Glandon, a very bright and correct equipage driven by an amazingly expressionless young coachman. The horses were beautiful, highstepping, and an admirable match so that the whole had an effect of reciprocal newness, cut out of one piece, as it were, and irreproachably finished. Some stray fowls from the farmyard poked their telescopic necks in and out of the rhododendron bushes with an excited appreciation of the sight. Further down the delapidated drive, on a rising field to the left, a farmhand leaned on his pitchfork and watched. He knew all the carriages of all the gentry about: none of them were quite so wonderful. The nose of a black ox pushed through the low hedgerow above the stone wall, and contemplated the empty drive through which

had flashed so astonishing an equipage. There was a hush over the land. It was four o'clock. The sun was just lowering, and the work-a-day world of these green pasturelands was having tea.

Out of the carriage stepped a very elegant young lady, as new as her equipage, though with the newness of a rose that opens in the morning to the sunlight, or a newly-culled bouquet tied with a coloured ribbon. She wore a white gown sprigged with tiny flowers, a blue sash and an immense hat with immense nodding feathers. She hesitated in putting her foot down on the damp patch before the door, and drew her elegant skirt round her feet as she tip-toed across the threshold into the great square hall where in vain she looked for servants to receive her. The place was like a sitting-room, and she experienced a sense of shyness at entering further, twin-born with a sudden curiosity. She peered about: it was so queer to

live in one's hall. The descendants of kings! A great lady, the daughter of an earl! Such a description of them had played upon the imagination of this western girl. She passionately admired titles, as children admire a king and a queen in their fairy stories. They meant, to her, colour and refinement and chivalry: the ideal of manhood—the thrill at touch with the passing procession. Any reproach of snobbishness would lack meaning to her. She had come from a country where there were no kings and queens, or lords and ladies, they lived in her mind as the most enviable wonder. They of course wore crowns and coronets and ermine, and they scattered gold to the poor, they wooed peasant girls and knights, and wedded gallant soldiers who might fight to win a princess. This was not actually her own description of it all, but at the back of her mind such a coloured picture remained, and no assurance that she neared being a

snob prevented her from openly declaring her delight in lords and ladies.

She had come to return Lady Anne Restan's call: she had come to an old English country house, and there were none of the things she had been led to expect, neither solemn flunkies nor carpeted halls, nor splendid nonchalant dogs lying proudly in the vestibule. There was no vestibule! She had heard that they were not well off, and had expected a grand shabbiness that in its way would be more awe-inspiring than new magnificence: a venerable butler in a rusty coat who might keep her waiting but who would assuredly come at last, and take her with ceremony to the apartments of Lady Anne. No one came however. She peered anew, and perceived with something of a shock a farmhand sitting at a table with his back to her, evidently having tea. She caught a glimpse of his profile. He was so handsome that his negligence in not observing her

entrance seemed an added disrespect. She stamped her foot a little impatiently.

"Is Lady Anne Restan at home?" she said in a very grand manner.

The farmhand rose hurriedly. She noticed he had a book in his hand, and that he wheeled round with less embarrassment than his class usually display when caught napping.

"I beg your pardon," he said before looking up—it was only an instant interval to notice rather than finish his sentence, and then he saw her. For her it was a triumph. He stood quite still, agape as it were, though his mouth was closed. The girl could not realise how entirely she was an apparition. Almost an angry flush spread over his face.

"Is Lady Anne Restan at home?" she repeated, and looked him straight in the eyes. She seemed like a princess.

"Oh! come in, please," he said at last. "I will fetch my sister. Do sit down."

His tone of voice at once struck her before she had quite grasped the meaning of his words; his movements, too, they were obviously the movements of a gentleman. She felt suddenly shy and a little angry. Why was Lady Anne's brother masquerading in such clothes? and why did he stand and stare at her as if she, instead of himself, were something abnormally peculiar. She would not introduce herself. He did not seem to have the vaguest idea who she was, nor to be pleased to see her, nor conscious of any need of apology for his own appearance. He took up an extraordinary piece of felt and put it upon his head for a hat, the crown and brim were a united piece without angle or ribbon. Having stared at her, as she conceived, overmuch, he seemed to dismiss her from his mind and to recall his intention of looking for his sister, with a kind of haste. In a moment he was out of the room. He had not found it in the least

needful to speak to her beyond the necessity of offering her a seat. She had not sat down, and now she hovered about the square hall, perplexed and interested, with a confusing mental picture of an exceedingly handsome yokel, who was not after all a yokel, interrupting her wonderment as she pilgrimaged round the room, peering at everything, always with a hope of finding something expressive of a great house. There was nothing.

Trevor Griffiths meanwhile strode along the path towards the back of the house. He stood for a moment in the sunlight and looked across the hills, then he hastened on. He found Lady Anne, after some time, in a walled garden grubbing for potatoes, and a shy-looking child with a big sack watching her expectantly. He guessed the potatoes were being given away. He stooped and with his strong hand released the young tubers from the ridges of mould.

"There is a visitor," he said.

"Who?" she answered; their heads almost touched as they stooped.

"I have not the faintest idea. She came in a brand new carriage and in a fancy dress!"

Lady Anne gathered herself up and began drawing off an immense pair of garden gloves. "What do you mean?"

He went on filling the girl's sack.

"Hadn't you better go and see."

"Trevor, you are very tiresome. Is it really a stranger?" She looked towards the house, then back at him filling the sack. Some moments went before he had finished and they had sped the little girl on her way, or that Lady Anne began to hasten. She thought she heard the wheels of a departing carriage and hurried to the house, leaving Trevor in the garden; but on entering the hall she found no one was there, only a very conspicuous visiting card on the table. She looked a

little troubled on reading the name, *Miss Sabrina Fairchild.*

"I am sorry," she said later to Trevor, who had not returned to find out who the bedecked visitor was. "I am sorry. She may think we didn't trouble. Those people are like that."

"What people?"

"People who acquire gentility! They are inclined to suppose one disputes their right."

"She struck me as well bred, but so did her horses and her driver."

Lady Anne laughed. "Her father is a vulgarian, but they say she is charming—I called. She is immensely wealthy."

"Is that why you called?"

Lady Anne looked pensive. "Oh! I think so. Wealth fascinates me: there is no rhyme or reason why that young lady should be born so wealthy, so far as her own merit goes, but there is all the reason of her wealth to make her interesting."

"It must be very tiresome to be interesting in that way—tiresome to be wealthy anyway," he added, and looked straight at his sister with an unflinching assurance. She received the look with a ruminating expression, a moment's pause, and then said, "It would be very nice if one really didn't care. The trouble is the over-caring—the false attitude towards it all." She got up and went to the window. "We would like not to sell those fields on the hill, and yet we must. And even more we would like some of the lost land back."

Trevor followed her to the window and looked out over her shoulder across the garden and fields to the rising horizon once all the manor lands. An expression of desire crept into his look, and regret; his passive face momentarily over-shadowed. They lingered, then went.

"If we were rich," he said "we would

not care. Have you never realised that wealth buys so little?"

"It would buy those fields."

"At the price of our interest in them. A little saving and we can keep them."

"Optimist."

"It is merely a question of a money-box."

"You should marry."

"Marry!"

"Yes."

He laughed. "Some one wealthy?"

"Why should you not marry her?"

"Whom?"

She picked up the white card on the table and read out with a half smile, "Miss Sabrina Fairchild."

"To buy the fields."

"The old place," she said turning away. "To buy it all back."

"The old house is still ours," he said.

"Ours in a dreadful kind of way!"

"What do you mean?" He looked distressed.

"It's hardly the way one likes to possess a thing—in complete dilapidation."

"Is it? is it?" he repeated with a kind of incredulous haste. He moved from her side and looked hurriedly at the walls.

"We must do something."

"Ah! it would be so simple."

"What would be simple?"

"If you married her!"

"The girl in a fancy dress?"

"Her dress doesn't matter. I am sure it was beautiful. Yes, marry her."

"Dear Anne, just to paper our walls and plaster our roof?"

"Nonsense! I have decided you should marry, decided it a long time. She happens to come, happens to be charming—and wealthy."

"You have decided that we are in a bad way because"—he looked round again, and

the real ugliness of the dilapidations suddenly struck him. His mind travelled over the house, in and out of the rooms, and remembrance came that things were deplorable everywhere, he could not ignore it, and his sister's attitude, her breaking away from all their firmest convictions on such questions—her pathetic proposition of surrender, seemed to him the worst of all the blotches in the general decay. No argument could alter the fact that she had said the thing, even if not quite seriously, and that they were generally demoralised for the want of money. It was difficult to finish his sentence.

"You have decided that we are in a bad way because," he repeated, "we want doing up. Let's do ourselves up. Of course it's horrid for you," he said, after a pause. "We will sell the fields on the hill."

The promised sacrifice was hardly comforting. The thought that the land must be

ceded, again filled him with impotent anger. He looked fiercely at his books, several were piled on the table, he made a plunge at one and remained standing as he read. Gradually his expression became absorbed. He sat down without lifting his eyes. Lady Anne returned to the window, with the face of a wistful intriguer.

V.

MARRIAGE with this beautifully dressed young woman, that was definitely what Lady Anne presented before his mind in a thousand insignificant ways. She did not openly discuss it, at least not seriously, but somehow took for granted the question was one they were nevertheless both considering, rendering him speechless towards any protest. She succeeded in making everything point towards such a union with an assumed impartiality that left him no grounds for reproach. He had seen the girl once, and since then she had become an intimate figure in their house through these ingenious allusions, a ghost who met him on the threshold; and because not actually in body there, she was always charming. He began to think of her, hardly even that, rather to see her mentally, in her

beautiful gown flitting through the old rooms, or appearing suddenly in the fields, but never with any sense that he had taken part in bringing her there—that responsibility lay with him. She had been forced upon his thoughts. During those many hours of physical labour the mind ruminates, and an idea that has once been suggested recurs between spadefuls of soil, between the actual turning-over of the earth, to take its own shape, to haunt as it pleases, unchallenged. In this way shadowy thoughts of her remained with him. Too insignificant to resist, by constant recurrence however taking a certain charming solidity. He left them as they came.

Lady Anne had actually nursed the idea with indefatigable insistence. It was not all a sense that the girl's money would make so much difference, but that change was needed, that what had been all right, so far bearable, even pleasurable, had become suddenly flat—

moral mustiness with the material dilapidations. If the girl proved to be what Lady Anne had imagined her, that of which she so strongly gave one the impression, would it not be the coming of spring to the old place, and Trevor saved from being drawn in, still so young, to a final autumn and winter with herself.

She went again to see her, in a lumbering carriage of extraordinary shabbiness, driven by an excellent soul who appeared to be anything in the world but a coachman.

Sabrina was in the garden. She watched with curiosity the immense thing all but waddle up the drive, and wondered why it did not look ridiculous, or whether it was that she was made to ignore it by the consciousness that inside sat Lady Anne Restan with all her immense dignity which so successfully covered the most ridiculous circumstances.

She received her in the drawing-room.

"I was so sorry I did not find you, Lady Anne, when I called."

"Oh! it was my fault," her visitor answered. "I was there, you know—but I was grubbing potatoes!"

"Do people wear a costume for grubbing potatoes?"

"Costume! no, I wear gloves. One needn't—it is even nicer without." She spoke quite seriously. "What made you think one wore a costume?"

"Oh!" Sabrina coloured. "I came upon your brother when I called, Mr. Griffiths, he seemed to be in some kind of costume."

"We don't trouble, you know," Lady Anne returned after a moment's pause, in which she had to seek out Miss Fairchild's meaning. Trevor's clothes evidently had not been what the young woman had expected, but she perceived too that his manners had been deplorable, for the girl in alluding to him had bridled with a charming haughti-

ness. Her thrust at his clothes was merely another way of letting her visitor know that she ignored the personality of Mr. Griffiths outside his clothes.

"But you must come and see us again—you did not give us a chance."

Her listener smiled an acquiescence, nevertheless Lady Anne perceived a solid intention on Miss Fairchild's part to do nothing of the kind. She therefore prolonged her visit. The girl would doubtless thaw. She leaned a little further back in her chair, hardly for a moment taking her eyes off the face of her companion. She talked very charmingly, very winningly; the sweet lines of humour on either side of her mouth remained there during the whole interview, and her prominent gray eyes, habitually cold in expression, softened beautifully.

The young girl was magically won. If this delightful old lady had not troubled to hasten to her reception on that past occasion

she was making ample amends, not however in any forced effort at obvious courtesy: a great personage making up for a slight, but by a very simple friendliness that was acceptable because the giver knew how to be peculiarly charming. "This is it, this is it," Sabrina found herself thinking, "she may grub potatoes, but she remains a queen. We have nothing like it our side," a reflection the generous traveller is apt to make. There were, of course, lots of charming old ladies on that great continent from which she had come, but she had not come all the way from there to admit such an idea. In this, perhaps, she was not American, nor did she know that, as she tossed her chin in recognising Lady Anne's qualities of queenliness, when she tossed her little chin in a kind of sympathetic homage to it, that in the middle-aged aristocrat's eyes she looked herself something of a young queen. Her beautiful clothes, they were extravagantly

beautiful, were worn with such simplicity; she sat straight, her shoulders thrown back, her hands free to beautiful movement, one must watch her hands as she poured tea; and the scheming lady found herself reflecting: "She is much too good for him, she will never take the slightest notice of him, unless by some extraordinary accident shabby clothes may pique her to an interest." They were interrupted suddenly by the entrance of her father; particularly interrupted. The girl effected the introduction with an admirable manner, but the man was not one who would let himself slip easily into the obvious social place, the very simple attitude of playing host to a caller. He had too much manner, because he was anxious to be taken at his ease, and then, lest he should seem too willing not to matter, as it were, he stiffened. He disliked society, and was unused to women, the association seemed to him complicated and tiresome—but, of course, since he

was master over affairs so prodigiously more important, doubtless this was to be easily mastered, too. This mastering became the interruption, one felt effort in the air. Lady Anne leaned back, a little bored at the prospect of having to suffer a quarter of an hour of his company for policy's sake. She scanned him, took him in critically without much noticing what he said, and gradually became interested.

He was a very small man with a tired kind of face. A world's weariness there, which was so habitually upon him that it had become merely a petty annoyance, the thing he expected to have to put up with. His eyes wore that inward look—one of perpetual mental seeings—peculiar to the business genius, the man who calculates far ahead, who is always calculating, by a hair's breadth to immense gains; by an immeasurable breadth to the destruction of others, this latter affecting him merely as part of the

game understood on both sides. The financier, like the general, counts nothing of importance but victory ahead. Fairchild was of the spiritual type of his kind—the great financier is often of that type—the animal in him dies, he becomes all mind, and the pleasures Mother Earth offers all her children are extraordinarily denied him.

He had an irritable face that could nevertheless smile divinely, a boyish, irresistible smile that crept all over his countenance. Those who met him for the first time always stared when he smiled, his smile was so complete a shock, a contradiction to the summing up of his character, for when shaking hands, when receiving any one, he habitually wore the most depressed demeanour. No one had ever succeeded in making him gracious when saying, How do you do, or, God speed you.

Lady Anne referred to the mines. "You are interested in them," she said, with a

movement towards some kind of conversation that might prove less tedious than the see-saw efforts they had so far kept up.

"Immensely," he said, dropping suddenly from an artificial height.

"There is gold?"

"An insignificant quantity, silver too, but the copper will make gold enough. Fortunes alone roll with the water of your red river into the sea, and you let it pour before your eyes away to waste—but that is so English. You have the finest opportunities in the world, the richest soil on earth, and the least is extracted from it—most abominable farmers, you English. The land starves for want of labour, and your race, as fine a race as there is, emigrates. Wealth stares you in the face in these islands—this absurdly small island is unique in its natural resources. It is worth a whole continent, yet I have never seen such poverty. You kill the goose that lays the

golden egg. You perpetually kill the geese that lay the golden eggs."

"But isn't that the system of all modern finance, elsewhere as well as here. The appropriation of the eggs and the killing of the producer, the perpetual mistaking of the symbol for the reality?"

The financier eyed Lady Anne, he wheeled round upon her, the smile illumined his face. She remembered Margaret Hughes' allusion to the man from the soil, and laughed. Margaret would find the trace of it in that smile. What was he going to say prefixed by such a smile?

"Finance is never productive of general good, you know; it is a legalised kind of grabbing, immensely profitable to the individual."

Lady Anne experienced a shock. The man was fabulously rich; for the moment she felt as if she were seated, hobnobbing, as it were, with a thief. The sensation of course

presented itself with the force of an unreasonable possession, a momentary flash that gave almost a comical view of the world's sense of integrity.

"That is how my daughter puts it——"

This came, as it seemed, some moments later. Lady Anne had been silently staring. The old villain then did not entirely think that way—that the girl did seemed charming. She had brains then, and a conscience.

"But look at her clothes," he added—which seemed a most irrelevant remark.

"Oh! I confess I fall," she said and smiled, just as her father did.

Lady Anne got up.

"Do come and see us soon," she said.

Sabrina promised; the wilful look of "no" had gone from her face.

When the lumbering carriage had driven away from the door she watched its undignified proportions recede down the drive between the tall firs, and laughed. She

decided that Lady Anne was delightful, her carriage just delightful, it was so funny, and her brother, and there she paused—well the sister was delightful enough to make up for her brother. She would go and see Lady Anne.

VI.

"THEY just plumped the coals down in front of our door and went."

Margaret Hughes sat closer into her chair with the movement of one giving a problem up, determined not to budge whatever arguments were used.

Lady Anne hovered in front of her with a distressed restlessness that suggested a mind bent on finding a way out, or rather in, for those coals. As usual her black dress formed a note in the old-fashioned coloured room with its green moss carpet, its plaid cushions and the white fleur-de-lis hanging; an emphatic note, for she was big. Margaret scanned her with half closed eyes, aware of Lady Anne's determination, and determined herself not to give in from the conviction that the case was hopeless. The coals must remain, an immense piled-up heap outside

their door, but she did not want to talk about coals. She wanted to look through some reviews on a table near, and to talk scandal.

Lady Anne saw nothing for the moment: her prominent gray eyes wore a wistful, meditative, far-away look that habited them when such important affairs had to be settled as coals, or the straying of pigs, or medicines for a suffering calf. Margaret knew the look, but never ceased to be deceived by it, at least into a hope that the beautiful lady was distracted towards thoughts of "Roland to the dark tower went."

However, Lady Anne flung out suddenly, "Nobody ever leaves coals out at their front door-step."

"No," said Margaret.

"You really can't."

"There is nothing else to be done."

"Is there not a single fisherman about?"

"Not one. They are all out pretending to fish."

"Oh! they do fish."

"I don't believe they do, one never sees any fish."

"We had some yesterday."

"You might have asked me to dinner."

"It was conger-eel."

Margaret kicked her foot contemptuously.

"How you resist, Margaret!"

"On the contrary I accept everything," she laughed. "Fortunately conger-eel was not offered me. It is said that none of us are tempted beyond our powers of resistance."

"If you called conger-eel turtle you would find it all right."

"I am not a symbolist. Something nasty disguised in symbol however enticing makes me sick just the same."

Lady Anne looked hard at her companion, tried to think of symbolism and all that it

meant, all that it didn't mean, and much that was horrid that it did, without approaching the thought that perhaps nothing reaches the mind but through symbol, that this appreciation alone separates us in understanding from animal-beast. She said, "But your coals! your coals!"

"Oh! I had forgotten them."

"It is going to rain."

"That I believe will improve the coal."

"It won't, and it will be awful to get them in wet. It is going to rain," she repeated.

"I am sure it is."

"We haven't a man at hand. They are all away at the five-acre piece excepting Gronway; if only Gronway were back—he has gone to the market at Llancwr."

"It doesn't matter."

"They will be stolen."

"Taffy was a Cymro, Taffy was a thief."

Lady Anne turned on her heel. "Oh!

for that matter, when Taffy is poor and sees coal lying about, and Taffy happens to be a rheumatic old woman, and Taffy lives in a hovel that is a kind of drain to the neighbouring hills, Taffy may be a Cymro or an Anglo-Saxon or a Dutchman, he becomes a thief."

"Oh! I am all for thieves." She pushed her lip out, raised her brows, and defied Lady Anne. "They can't take much without being seen."

"Your mother cannot afford that sort of thing."

Margaret flushed. Her mother could not afford that sort of thing, so she sat up with a look of concession towards following out any plan to get those coals in before they were wet and stolen by impecunious Taffies.

For some time the two looked at one another, then there was a scrunching of gravel outside and Trevor passed the window.

"Ah! there's Trevor! he'll do."

"I protest," said Margaret, jumping up.

"Nonsense."

"Oh! but I do."

"At what do you protest, Miss Margaret?" He was in the room.

"Trevor," said Lady Anne, "Trevor, do go at once with Margaret, do, my dear boy, and take in those coals. In their usual way, they just threw them down outside without waiting to ask. It is going to rain, and they will be stolen, and how can poor Mrs. Hughes get her coals if they are outside her door."

"Swine," said he. "Come along, Miss Margaret—we'll do it."

"I shan't permit it."

"Very well, but we'll do it just the same, only it's understood you didn't permit it."

Outside he said, "What is there to be done?"

Margaret laughed. After all it was sport. She looked up at the gray scurrying clouds, immense disproportionate things like shadowy giants striding over the earth, so that

the look of distant mountains, the near sea, the rocks, and the stretching pasture-lands, all became diminutive to the sight, suggesting little earth cradled in immense space. "The coals," she said, "are at our front door, the business is to take them through the garden to our shed behind—a wheelbarrow would be necessary."

"Good," said he, and went off for a wheelbarrow. Then the two sailed away down the long avenue with barrow and shovel to Tor Road, a white road winding up hill and down dale on the cliffs that were rocks, till it reached Tor Bay, an inlet of blue calm water lying like a lake, planted with ridges of black rock in steepled rows, forming a natural harbour for fishermen's crafts, and opening the valley inland just far enough for a village to settle down or climb up the edges of the cliffs.

Mrs. Hughes lived in one of three little modern white detached houses, one story high,

with peaked roofs, and a flight of white steps leading to a door that opened abruptly on the topmost step, leaving little room for the hapless visitor to stand with dignity: one took refuge on a lower step till the door was well opened lest it might be shut in one's face, and catch one's tail unawares as one turned. The other two houses were inhabited by retired pilots. The populace did not regard Mrs. Hughes as a person of any importance because she dwelt in such a house, and was neither on intimate terms with the farmers nor the county. By failing to decide her rank in this world of theirs, they found it possible, when convenient, to fail in manners towards her: they *plumped* her coals outside her door and rode away. They sometimes omitted to send in her parcels from the town. The shopkeeper is apt to resent gentility living humbly, and only Lady Anne's title and her brother's place, still something of a manor, doubtless inherited from folk of

importance, preserved them from like inattentions. The Cymro, at any rate, of this one little island is different from other free Celts in that he reserves to himself the right to be abominably uncivil; the distinction is peculiar to all classes, if in a less degree (as always in a less degree are such shortcomings) to the peasant farmers of the soil.

But Mrs. Hughes, a sweet Christian soul, something of a recluse, found no fault with the way of the world as she charmingly described all such misdemeanours. They reached the pile of coals and Trevor set to his work. He filled his barrow with shovel loads; the fine dust flew about him and settled in minutest layers on his face. Margaret, after watching some time with reluctant directions and emphatic protests, at last sat down on the door-steps and talked. He leaned on his spade now and then and looked at her as he answered, so that over the coals these two hob-nobbed, discussed the meaning

of words and the significance of some learned man's disquisitions on sociology in a recent review. They slipped in and out of their subjects as talkers working out of doors do, leaving unfinished some train of thought as the work called away attention or some movement in the landscape attracted it.

Not very far from them, in a twisted foot-path that made an effort at being a road-way, down which carts undoubtedly went, having made deep ruts on either side, and across which, in spite of this, grass and gorse and thistle succeeded in trespassing, a young girl in a white flimsey gown, a gown that suggested butterfly wings as it swished from side to side, picked her steps in the daintiest of copper-coloured shoes, and stockings bought with holes all ready made, and more expensive for that, revealing a white instep in cross bars, as white as the frothy lace petticoats tumbling about it.

The young lady wore a blue sash and an

immense black hat with nodding feathers. She was tired and hot, and pouted, being a town young lady unused to rough roads and a mile that could stretch to three. Why were miles in the country so elastic? At last she turned the corner, came upon a smooth bit, saw the sea before her and all the black clouds rising now in the most formidable way towards showers; those clouds would break and pour maliciously down upon her. She was one mile from home, which really was three miles, and she did not in the least know where she was; as for her destination, the safe arrival there had become quite a remote possibility in her speculations. Shelter at present was the affair, but where? She hastened along the smoother road towards a terrace on the cliffs. On this were three funny little houses, very demure and neat looking, with little street doors that, like those in a doll's house, looked as if they wouldn't open, she had

already discovered that most of the inhabitants entered their houses by the back way. She had a thought of seeking the back door of one of these when she perceived a man filling a barrow with coal from a heap just in front of the prim door-steps of one of the doll's houses. He at any rate might tell her where she was. She did not notice a girl seated on the steps. The man was stooping as she approached. "Please, am I anywhere near Tor Bay and a house called Glyndwr? I looked everywhere, there seem to me no houses more than cottages about, and these."

The stooping man stood straight, the broad shoulders squared and a funny kind of hat came off, a hat which the young lady seemed to recognise in relation to that grave handsome face which looked at her rather as if she were not there, at any rate with no embarrassment. He bowed, this coal-heaver, and she found herself bowing back. She felt she was in a dream. It began to rain

immense drops that sputtered down on the coals. She drew her white skirts around her.

"Houses with street doors that don't open—" she gasped.

"The rain will spoil your dress," said the coal-heaver. "Hadn't you better go in?"

"My temper is in greater danger," she answered, "for I don't know where to go in; and may I ask who you are?"

"This is Glyndwr."

"Won't you come in, Miss Fairchild, the door does open."

Sabrina looked up. On the steps stood a dark girl with a broad frank face and eyes that twinkled, beautiful brown eyes that had evidently not taken amiss the disparagement of the little house.

Sabrina laughed. "I can't even apologise" she said—"we can only consider that I didn't say anything. Are you Miss Hughes? and, please, I will come in."

They entered the little house and into a small sitting-room. Margaret shut the door and stood looking at her guest who was doing her best to make the right remarks on a first call under such extraordinary circumstances. Margaret could not be ceremonious, it was beyond her capacities, so she waited patiently till she thought sufficient time had elapsed for manners, as it were, and then said, with a hasty look at the window against which the rain was thudding in larger and larger drops, "Oh! but he will get wet, he must come in too."

"The coal-heaver!" remarked Sabrina before she was quite aware of what she was saying. Of course the coal-heaver would come in—had she not bowed to the coal-heaver?

"It is Mr. Griffiths, you know, you have met him, haven't you?"

VII.

EVERY one of gentle birth, far and near, called on the young American, and she received invitations to parties so far across the island that it was impossible to go to them: elder sons rode up to pay their respects to the American man of wealth. Sabrina guessed that her wealth counted everything, that these exclusive families exaggerated their hospitality towards her; she did not find them by nature hospitable. She divined that an effort was being made, and that the daughters and sons of these houses determined not to have her suspect that they had not wholly taken her into their circles: it had hardly been a taking, rather a grabbing; their constant good temper towards her, she perceived, was not dealt out to anyone else in quite the same way. She suffered from

a surfeit of the leading *rôle*, and, well as the American girl can play that part, this one at any rate had a certain sweet sensitiveness, a certain humour, that made her alive to the absurdity of caring for the questionable crown they offered. A young baronet proposed at their third meeting; he had flirted with the whole "county." Sabrina had seen some very sweet English girls, beautiful girls, waiting for his word; she had seen him display preferences that would mark a girl even in America as claimed, or if not, point to a deplorable business on hand. She turned upon him.

"Why, why, why?" she said with amazing fire. "Quick!"

He stammered and looked absurd, surprised, unhappy man, that he was not leaped at.

She gave him no time. "You love me, I suppose?" she said.

"Of course," he answered.

"My eyes, no doubt."

"You have very beautiful eyes," he said with new courage.

She laughed. He flushed.

"I have seen," she said, "some girls with even more beautiful eyes than mine not very far from here. I am told their owners cannot afford husbands—only young men to play with their hearts. Fortunately, I can afford a husband; but I am not in need of one just now!" She laughed again and looked exquisite. The youth rose to his feet, scarlet.

"It is hardly necessary to be brutal," he said, standing straight.

"I apologise," she answered quickly, "only please go, please go at once."

When she was alone a shadow of wistfulness fell over her face. She sat still for some time. There was one man who did not try to find favour with her—one man who did not notice her, yet one who seemed so

much of a man that his notice might count more than all those others' homage. He had not even called on her father. With him at least their wealth mattered nothing. Lady Anne too had been charming. It was possible to discriminate. Her friendliness in no way resembled the effusions of those other people; moreover, Sabrina had fallen a willing victim to Lady Anne, in love with her in her own sweet impetuous way. She had gone to Glandon more than its inhabitants had come to her, indeed *he* had not come at all, and she had found it possible not to mind. Their place was an oasis in a very monotonous world to which her wealth had given her entry, indeed had secluded her from any other, so far. She went to Glandon as a child to some favoured secret place where the usual tiresomeness of grown-up tyranny is excluded. Once inside the gates, she experienced a sense of very natural happiness —the world was outside those gates. The

starry wild flowers that patterned the turf on either side, that trespassed occasionally on to the path, the absence of any servants about, and the wide door opened to receive her at once into the great comfortable room, lifted her heart up to the gaiety that was spontaneous and inconsequent. Mr. Trevor might wear yokel's clothes and work about the place and never notice that she was a beautiful young lady, he could not spoil her day. On occasions he turned towards her the inscrutable face, summed her up as she perceived, and threw her a word for her worth; she had wit, and, for all his learning, she sent a return shaft that did not hit amiss. At night she found herself feeling shyer of him. An atmosphere a little more conventional, hardly that, permeated the place when the curtains were drawn. Evening clothes transformed him, too, not a little, the severity of black, into something of the intellectual ogre she knew him to be. She

would hesitate before drawing her bow, sometimes turn away, possessed by an emotion that tossed the blood through her veins in an unexpected fashion, so that her heart must needs beat suddenly quicker. He was so detestable and she had to notice him,—he was so detestable and yet she found him filling her thoughts, and making her listen as he talked wholly impersonally, tossing out satirical criticisms of the world's doings, while his eyes seemed to look beyond the meaning of his words to some humane philosophy that might make him infinitely tender to a woman were she suddenly to cross the path of his life when she might need him. Sabrina knew herself not to be that possible woman, and to herself indignantly repudiated the notion that for that very reason she was finding him detestable. She would even withdraw the *detestable*, and when assuring herself that she was not for him nor he for her, find herself saying—ah! but he

is extraordinary! Strong like an oak-tree, some new Pan of the world—the child of nature who was withal intellectual. She had never met a grown person who would not belittle himself in some way into a momentary dwarf of malice or affectation or pretence; and then, she curved her lip and decided that in this she had found the reason of his detestability. A man may not be better than his fellow-creatures in such trivial matters, a genius is permitted, but a human being built merely on finer lines than any one else was just out of place and detestable. To her, who watched him, at any rate, he seemed finer, perhaps only because he was different; we speak of him through her eyes, and feel that the keen-witted girl was hard on the road to forgive him that—hard on the road to bend a knee absurdly enough to the man who passed her by. They were thrown together more as the days went. He had become used to her being there, that

was how she summed it up; he talked more as she grew silent, talked before her more than to her.

On one occasion he showed her the library, a long room, literally with walls of books bound in old rich-coloured leathers, not a very large room, and with a low roof and three long windows at one end reaching to the ground and curtainless; panels of light inserted between the shelves, showing a stretch of green to the horizon untraversed by any visible road, and quite unwooded. The mind could linger uninterrupted on the sweeping sea of green, escape for a moment from the tyranny of the books' gossip to a mystery of silence—the earth and skies meeting.

"It is all we have left of our wealth," he said as they stood on the threshold, while she had looked down the long room without speaking. Her mind rushed towards all the possibilities this room suggested, pictured a

dignified past that must have been so extraordinarily different.

"Do you ever regret?" she said in a moment.

"The wealth?"

She started. "Well, it means that, I suppose—to keep it up."

"To keep what up?"

She laughed. She had entered the room, and now sat down in a low chair. "Shut the door at any rate. You see there is no one to shut the door."

"You mean," he said after he had closed the door, "that such a house requires servants, those strange modern degraded human beings whose type has existed in no other age as free men. Do you mean do I regret our lacking of flunkies?"

"Oh! no, but all the rest that requires——"

"Flunkies!"

"Perhaps."

"Then no, no, a thousand times no! I think flunkies and all that necessitates flunkies, horrible. They would turn out the ghosts, and I doubt they would leave any in their place. Those other servants who were here once, were friends of my ancestors —servants to men and women who in their turn were servants to some one else. Would you have me oust such ghosts?"

"You are never serious."

For a moment he looked down at her, their eyes met, she flushed but could not withdraw them. He did not seem to be laughing at her, he seemed to be looking down into her heart and wondering. A strong protectiveness surrounded her. A physical intimacy hovered between them, her mind emptied itself of any thoughts, her lips parted and curved into a smile that looked a little frightened. The blood was rising to her cheeks and a numbness holding warmly her limbs. She could not move unless to-

wards him. The least vain of women, she felt beautiful for him. Mother Earth stirred in her. She wished overwhelmingly to yield, not in any sense shamefully. The spirit of the girl quickened too, through her senses perhaps.

He stood for some, time, then he turned abruptly.

"Oh! I have forgotten, I have forgotten—I must go now."

The door closed upon him. He had gone, he had left her after that. She got up from her seat and looked about the empty room, silent and warm and secluded. She went up to one of the bookcases and touched the beautiful bindings with the tips of her fingers, then cushioned her head against the shelves. She was blushing and she was laughing and she was ashamed. "He has gone to look after stray heifers, he has certainly gone to look after stray heifers—Surely he is detestable."

VIII.

"YOU must marry her."

Lady Anne was watching the slim figure of Sabrina as she walked with Margaret Hughes up and down on the grass outside. Her white frock had little patches over it, perfect ovals of sunlight that were bright gold. The shadow of her figure on the grass was purple, and her black hat seemed only a deeper purple, and where the sun did not catch her dress the soft material clung opalesque, so that she seemed an irridescent figure hovering in the bright light. One's eyes became chained to follow the swish of her skirts. Trevor Griffiths looked at her only when she crossed the path just where his eyes were resting. He stared steadily before him, throwing out rings of blue smoke that curled in their lines upwards.

"Ah! that is absurd," he said.

"Why?"

"In every way."

"You admire her."

She passed his line of vision. "Her clothes."

"Nonsense! she is a very peculiarly beautiful girl."

"She dresses beautifully, that is why you think her beautiful. Personally I never see anything but her clothes. I admit they are exquisite and expensive — but she is not beautiful."

Lady Anne compressed her lips for a moment. "She would be beautiful in a sack," she said.

"If there were gold in it, no doubt."

"In an empty sack."

"You are prejudiced."

"You are blind."

"That is precisely what I refuse to be. Her gold fails to gild her, at least in my eyes. I have no doubt you believe what you say, you think she is beautiful."

"She *is* a beautiful girl, a good girl, a clever girl, a rich girl. My dear Trevor, the thing is too absurdly right. You cannot help yourself. You cannot be so obstinate, so crookedly perverse to miss such an occasion. You have not sought it—it has come to you. If you do not love her, you ought."

Trevor suddenly laughed.

"How you treat the question," he said.

Lady Anne looked at him some time in silence.

"Have you ever been in love?" she said without any visible hesitation at putting so personal an interrogatory. She seemed fairly sure of her answer. Yet in her tone she rather demanded an affirmative as the only valid excuse for his present attitude. "Do you know anything of the matter at all?" Her prominent gray eyes challenged him.

"A great deal."

His sister looked incredulously impatient.

"I started to attain it at ten."

"Precisely, and you got no further."

"I went ahead amazingly for some time."

"Then?"

"Oh! I remained faithful. She was a princess, but somehow she was poor and lived in a tiny cottage in a wood. She was waiting for me to find her. I always meant to go and look for her, but I never did, even as a child I was afraid—afraid she wouldn't be there,—I couldn't have borne that, so I never went."

"So she has come to you."

"Ah! well, it would be amusing to think that. But she isn't my little girl from the woods. She isn't shabby and poor and disdained. She does not require me. On the contrary, by your making out I require her!"

Lady Anne looked steadily at her brother's smiling countenance. "Your fairy story philosophy also tells the story of a poor peasant who was really a prince and whom

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a great and lovely princess takes by the hand and weds."

"Yes, but that was the kind of story I could never bear. The first one I read made me passionately angry."

"Enough of nonsense, Trevor. You are thirty-seven."

"Sister Anne, sister Anne."

"You are thirty-seven."

"Then I am too old for Miss Fairchild."

"You are too old to fall in love."

"That's final."

"You are not too old to care very much and to marry a very charming girl."

"Ah! how you persist. She is not even charming, nor clever, nor pretty, nor anything on earth but—but—but something dressed."

"Trevor!"

"Something rich."

"Oh!"

"Something with an accent."

"She has no accent."

"Well then she hasn't even that if you like—we will say part of an accent."

"Trevor—she has a beautiful voice."

"Of course! I prefer Margaret Hughes' voice."

"Trevor!"

"Margaret Hughes. I would much rather marry Margaret Hughes."

"Trevor!"

"I said Margaret Hughes."

"You are dreadful."

"But if you don't mind I won't marry either." He sat closer in his chair, crossed his knees, looked for a moment at his sister, then back again to where the two figures would again pass his line of sight. There was a long pause between them. Lady Anne had not finished, she had so much still to say. She meant to rout him at any rate in argument, to pour out a very long tirade of convincing words yet, but the unexpected mention of their little friend made her pause—

that companion of them both who had been with them more or less for years, who had already taken too great a part in their life to take a greater, whose social position had from the first prevented the good lady from ever considering such a possibility as her brother had suggested, so eradicable are the prejudices of those who have descended conspicuously from an ancestor. The idea, however, once presented, was accepted simply as a possible fact, and Lady Anne really had no conscious prejudices, she had merely not thought of the thing from innate prejudice; for which we must blame instinct, which is as hereditary as an aristocratic nose.

The interruption however affected her more with regard to the girl than to him. She did not believe her brother cared, but it came to her that perhaps Margaret Hughes did, and the kind heart of her paused that she might take a mental view of such a state of affairs. It struck her that Margaret

Hughes had not much luck, that this really fine-natured girl who gave so much to other people would always be only a kind of accompaniment to a scene, as she looked now, flitting by the side of that white radiant figure; that she would always give and never receive; that she would never claim anything, and that all the same she counted very much to those into whose life she came, and who so little recognised how much. A sudden desire to play the godmother to her, to turn her influence that way, made her catch her breath as at the thought of something very pleasant. Then she dropped the consideration as she looked at her brother from under her heavily-drooped eyelids and conceived that he had said the thing in impertinence, and that of course such a happening was impossible.

"Trevor, you talk nonsense."

"I thought we were both doing that."

"I am quite serious."

"How you persist."

"I persist because I am convinced you yourself feel the thing as I do, but for some scruple of conscience—some girl's idea of chivalry—you resist, and by resisting cut yourself off from a chance of very considerable happiness. You do not care for wealth, you can exonerate yourself from any accusation of that kind, and I suppose you don't care for what other people think?"

"Not in the least."

"With her aid you can farm the land as you want to, you can really be of use in the world. You can produce wealth. Add to hers not diminish it, in the only legitimate way, by production."

"Anne, you ought to be destroyed. I despise your logic. You want me to marry the girl because she is rich."

"Not because she is rich, but because as well as being rich she is charming and young and desirable."

"We would hardly be discussing it were it not a question of money."

"Well, even if it is so, even if her money matters vastly! Does it signify? Is there any sense in despising such a consideration? At any rate what is your alternative? Are you so extraordinarily happy at present? What is the alternative a man like you ever has before him? A dull enough existence—a selfish enough existence—and pre-eminently a stupid existence."

"Stupid?"

"It is stupid to be handicapped."

"I deny that I am that. I deny the necessity that you see. I have schemes."

"There is of course no necessity. There is of course never any necessity to do the reasonable and expected thing. One somehow always finds the necessity for doing the contrary. Hence material from which history and romance are composed."

He smoked for some time in silence. The

white figure far down in the lawn was alone now. Margaret Hughes had gone.

"Anne," he said, as he got up at last, "you are very troublesome." Then he walked down the path to where the white skirts were swishing the buttercups on the lawn.

* * *

"What have you done with Miss Hughes?" he said.

"I am waiting for her, she is coming back."

They stood still looking at one another. She faced the sun and it danced over her, played about her eyelashes so that he could not see the expression of her eyes. Her fingers went up to lower the brim of her hat, then he saw when they were suddenly shaded that she threw a mocking look. He knitted his brows. "Aren't you tired of walking? Come and sit here." He went to a bench and sat down. He felt in his pocket for his cigarette papers—"If I may smoke," he

added without looking at her. He rolled a cigarette, leaning forward, his hands on his knees and his eyes on the ground; now and then he looked up to see if she were coming. She walked up and down a minute longer, stopped and examined a rose-bush near the bench, and then at last as if a little without thinking she sat down; she had a great crimson rose in her hand, which she tossed unmercifully in her lap.

"What have you been talking about?" he said, "with Margaret? I am sure you are demoralising her."

"Her old days as a student."

"She wants to go back to them."

"I don't think so—she likes to talk about it."

"She will never go back."

"I wonder why you think so?"

"This island is bewitched, it holds us all prisoners. If you stay much longer, you know, you too will never get away."

She laughed a little nervously. "I am not afraid."

"About being a prisoner?"

"I couldn't be bewitched," she said maliciously.

He looked at her.

"Perhaps! You are not a free Celt. You are the outcome of a mixture of every race in the world. Mother Earth repudiates you, mystery and sentiment and the gods and the fairies, Pan himself, pass you by."

"On the contrary, Mother Earth is proudest of those she has taken of her best to produce."

"You do great honour to the prodigals who never even came home."

"I have always thought the prodigal the preferable person."

"He is poisonous and conceited."

"Oh!"

"If you knew anything about the soil—about the arduous labour and the coming of

the crops, the Springtime and the Autumn and the Winter—the meaning of the world's wealth, the meaning of the world's suffering, you would find the prodigal both poisonous and conceited—don't pull to pieces that poor rose!"

"What were *you* talking about?" she said.

"Matrimony," he answered abruptly, and looked away to the horizon. She moved hardly perceptibly on her seat, coloured under her hat, and for the moment held her breath from fear that she might colour more, or that he might turn and see her.

"Is your sister thinking of marrying?"

"She is very matrimonially inclined."—There was a pause between them.

"I have ideals, immense ideals, I tried to tell them her."

"You do not approve then."

"How could I?—how could I?" he said brusquely, still looking away from her. "I

who love the earth—I who love to husband it —I who love nothing but simply to labour and intimately to know all that comes from her—to hobnob too with the animals, to give them what I can for all that we take from them"—he paused. "I cannot think of matrimony as every one does. I dream sometimes —such a woman as one dreams of rises on the horizon, the ideal Demeter—the sun is in her hair and she is strong and she is wholly a mother."

The girl interrupted him—her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes defiant. "No more a human being, I suppose, than a mare or the mother of a calf."

"You are wrong, I did not mean that—woman mothers the world's ideals. I would have her herself—and she must not—particularly she must not," he looked down at her frills, "dress."

Sabrina looked down at her frills too, then she turned her head and said quietly:

"I meant did you approve of Lady Anne's marrying."

"Oh! Lady Anne is not marrying."

"Then why were you talking of it?"

"My dear Miss Fairchild, we were talking horribly, believe me, we were talking horribly. Why, we were talking, a most absurd reason, because you are——"

They were interrupted by Margaret Hughes. Sabrina got up to meet her—slipped her hand on the girl's shoulder and waited for her to speak with an intimate friendliness, a protective movement somehow towards the less beautiful girl; an assurance that implied, too, I want to be with you—I do not want to be alone with him.

IX.

MONA LODGE was not a large house, a quaint old building approached by an avenue that actually formed part of the garden. The procession of trees interrupted the shelving lawns and curved at last to the right, leaving a considerable space of grass before the bowed windows. Behind the house was an immense walled enclosure; the wall was thick enough and high enough for a fortification, only that out of the chinks on the very top grew bright red foxgloves, and the door that opened inwards was barely large enough to let through a moderately sized gun; it revealed, too, a panel of colour and light, as it creaked back, tempted one inwards to its plenty, giving a view of blossom in the springtime, and rich fruits and coloured flowers in the summer; the flowers were wild, pansies and briars

and foxgloves, for flowers were not cultivated, but they trimmed the borders on their own account and were friendly with the vegetables, displaying their colours against the young green of cabbages and the feathery tops of carrots with as much pride as their cultivated cousins, across the sea in England, against emerald lawns. In the centre of the garden was a well, an oblong stone bath sunk in the ground with a stone roof, and steps down to it, the whole of a period that is undateable. The well is shallow, and the water rises up through the stone in an imperceptible way, and never through summer or winter does it seem less full, though all the water for the house is taken from it. Sabrina and her father found the walled garden out after they had been some time in the place. They had observed the formidable walls, were told it was a garden—they understood a kitchen garden, and did not at once trouble to explore. They discovered it

separately. Sabrina danced down the pebbly paths with very pleasure, and stooped down like any child to peer into the well.

"We must buy it, Sabrina," the American said at once.

"The whole place?"

"Why not? I have never seen anything anywhere at all comparable to this miniature estate."

"Or like the island, or like the people, or like the clear heavens, and the tumultuous weather, or like that strange mountain of copper and its red river over there, or like Lady Anne," she said.

The American looked towards the purple mountain that pointed to the horizon above the fields which shelved upwards behind them, the highest hill in the undulating country, and a solid mass of copper and gold and silver and blue stone. For hundreds of years man with his hands had dug great holes in its top down to its base—vast shining holes.

Mother Earth

Incredible that human hands could have dug them—abysmal in appearance, and wide as a space between mountains, furlongs across. Shouting at one's best, a passer-by the other side would hardly receive the sound, and only with straining eyes perceive one's figure, a little blot on the piled mounds thrown up to mountains in themselves. From these deep places, ever deepening them, the inhabitants of the island all round to the sea, for generations, had drawn their wealth; dissipated it; shipped it across the narrow strip of blue water to the foreign England; built seignorial houses, become decadent through luxury, or poor again through wanton spending; creeping some of them back to the great hole to find daily sustenance by digging deeper, to throw up wealth that had been theirs for the stranger. From it flowed a river of crimson water, transparent like wine, rushing on to the sea, great pools of it here and there holding wealth as in a cup,—the

whole thing absurdly like magic. Old iron is cast into these pools, and new copper is evolved from it. Mother Earth was surely extraordinarily generous to her children on this tiny island, and yet the people were poor. This was the most amazing fact to the American: they seemed extraordinarily ignorant of the ways of profit, capable only of cheating for it, and in a most barefaced, childish manner, losing a pound to grab at an ill-gotten penny, obstinately grabbing, obstinately cheating, to dire ruin, if must be, but always with head aloft watching for one another's deftness, the expression remaining in the eyes, eyes that stare crookedly without squinting. It would seem that the truth of the matter lies in the fact that at root the Cymro is not a tradesman, and he looks to cheating as the quickest way out of a nasty business.

As Fairchild scanned the purple mountain (always peculiarly purple by reason of

the rocky soil), with its windmill on the summit, used as a pumping power, a sprawling indication of backwardness, and a flaunting sign that the world here could wait for the weather, he realised that in the hands of his own countrymen the place would pour gold, and a certain satisfaction that it was safe from their hands took hold of him. Wealth was disregarded in one place on earth at any rate. There was a humourous tranquillity in the notion. They took out their bucketfuls as they wanted it, and were enriched in a way. Moreover two hundred years of similar passive exertions, with occasional more strenuous efforts, made it the very wonderful place it was.

Later on he questioned if he were not becoming dangerously attached to the very simple life at Mona Lodge, if he were not buying happiness at a very low price. Was he then rich after all only to care most for such a life. They had travelled over the

world, he and his daughter; she had danced at the most accessible of foreign palaces, they had visited foreign cities and in most had been well received, for their money's sake, no doubt, but still received, and able to command the world's good things whenever they wished. If their wealth had made the happenings in their life very much a repetition one of another, and the attention they received was always coloured with a certain offensive tolerance, he could himself hardly realise that there was any other life to experience. He had bought the best with his money, and the best had tired him not a little. The best, like the worst, may be monotonous, more especially when it is bought. Sabrina had shown herself different from most girls of her class. She had paused before the whirl of fashion, and found it rather foolish and its votaries very painted. She had come out of her fêteing unspoiled. She still felt romantically about lords and ladies, even though

barons and princes had not personally impressed her with the dignity of their titles. She was capable of resenting spiritual paltriness, of standing aloof when worldly obligations sent her kind spinning absurdly to convention's whipping. Yet she loved pretty manners and pretty clothes. A natural idealist, she sailed like a perfect ship over the crests of the most destroying seas. She did not expound her creed, she was the winged thing itself. The most weary pessimist sat warm and comforted in her presence, threw overboard his philosophy and disgracefully belied his most assured convictions. To be with her was to be immortal, imperiously immortal, however convicted of ultimate dissolution; to be with her was to be young, full of laughter, full of beliefs, generous, the veriest libertine as pure as a boy. Fairchild secretly wondered at her, at first had been disappointed that she had not wedded a prince, and at last opened his

eyes to the most overpowering fact that a child of his had scorned a prince. Morally he walked tip-toe in her presence for some time. Now the country, like Sabrina, was mocking at his princedom of gold, and weaving a spell round him: the mists of her early mornings; the infinite doings, rustlings through space, audible only in what man called silence, the country's silence, movement treading on the wave of sound, as it were, till night comes, the wistful night of the country: darkness rocking her world; the countenance of space revealed that it might hush the tired nihilist; then the leaping, warming sun — room here. to throw its gorgeous covering of gold—and the growing things, the fresh green in the brown mould, and the noises of dumb creatures. He was dismayed at the comfort of it all, it did not seem possible that such things could be so important, and he stole secretly to the walled garden just to reassure himself of his own

satisfaction. He began to fear that Sabrina might wish to go: start again the wandering life they had led for years—or to settle in a city, and it seemed that that really was what must happen; his own humour would change too, and this view he had been given of the god Pan be shut out from his sight as if it had never been. This aged financier all but saw dryads in the trees, and when walking alone felt in full company: some madness of the earth was in his blood, a sudden return to sensuous life from almost a lifetime spent in mental calculations.

A young man who had had a delirious rush to the making of millions, just at this time had leaped into the sea from the deck of a great steamer. Not in failure but in success, the money bags in his grasp. He could purchase anything in the world. There was nothing left for him to care to purchase; so he leaped into the deep shining waters that asked the payment of his life for

the return of its coolness on his lips. This the magnificent spending then: to yield to the earth's hurrying waters the great price! A strange delirium of the wine drinker, the desire to be cradled in the cold arms of breaking waves, the cooling nectar so high-priced. Earth had taken back her creature, brought the flood of her greatest movement to lure the body. Such a madness was upon Fairchild, only a kindlier one. The sod threw up a warmth to his old body, and the fragrance of flowers and the colour of flowers bewildered him to their homage. The making of gold, that making of gold, what a foolish matter!

Sabrina came upon him one day in his shirt sleeves digging. She stood amazed, his linen gleamed so white, his collar was so high and stiff and pointed, his tie fastidiously knotted in just the peculiar fashion that a man of the world knew how to wear. His small white nervous hands clutched the

spade's handle. He had come out in his house shoes, patent leather shoes, with the little formal bow just on the instep showing conspicuously as he put his foot upon the spade to force it into the ground.

"What are you doing?—Oh! what are you doing?"

"Gardening." He did not stop to answer, but just looked very seriously up at her with an expression that suggested she might occupy herself better than by standing there and pulling the most ironical faces at him.

"Are you going to plant flowers?" she said, catching the feeling of his seriousness.

"No," he answered, "potatoes."

"It is the wrong time of year."

He at once stopped. "You are mistaken. The gardener gave me the potatoes. I said I wanted to see something come up that I had planted—quickly. He said they came up quite quickly." Then the old man laughed and Sabrina laughed. He brushed,

with a fastidious movement, some dirt off his stockings and put on his coat. He took his daughter's arm and walked her up and down the centre path. As they passed his work she said:

"Do you think anything will come up?" and he said:

"I am sure."

A look of delight came into her eyes, and then she said with a little curl of her lip, "It will come up guineas!"

"Carper!" he said with the quaintest of smiles. "But seriously, Sabrina, I am determined to buy this place. What do you think about it?"

The colour leaped like a suddenly hoisted flag to her face, and she paused before speaking, as if she were a little afraid of appearing too eager. She wanted above all things in the world to become a country girl; she did not admit to herself that the Demeter coming from the horizon, with

the gold of the sun in her hair and great motherhood in her heart, had become an ideal of which she was grovellingly desirous to be a votary.

"I think it will be delightful."

"Do you really mean it?" she said after a pause.

"Why not? We need never stay longer than we care, you know; but it would be a charming refuge to come back to. It is so secluded from the ordinary atmosphere of the world's doings. One is glad to find *that* somewhere: some place where a native individuality is sufficiently strong to hold one captive in the very simplest of ways, to call us to a willing service rather than to serve us. I am tired of racing over the globe in a *train-de-luxe* to visit places that never receive as themselves." He paused, looked intensely his meaning at her, "that horrible *train-de-luxe*," he went on suddenly, as if she had mentally followed his thoughts, "it always

remains a train in spite of the most exaggerated *luxe*, and it never takes us to a whole city, only to an emphasised repetition of our own in the West, planted absurdly enough for us, in the heart of it. After all," he added, "you need not stay here even if I do. You could pay visits just the same whenever you wished."

The girl had sat down on a bench. She looked away towards the branches of some trees that rose above the high wall, densely green into the clear atmosphere. Rooks were sweeping in circular patrol about their nests, making great noise over the silent garden, emphasising the peace of the place, striking a chord of sound in accompaniment to the fragrant silence.

"Why have you changed?" she said suddenly, with an eye on a particular hovering bird whose sable wings for a moment had curved into a perfect arch.

"I?" he answered, turning on his heel

and looking at her. "What do you mean? Changed!"

"Perhaps you don't know that you have. I believe it's the rooks—we have never been where there were rooks before. Yes, do let's buy the place and live here forever."

The wooden door in the wall on the other side from where they sat, swung open, and Sabrina became aware that the figure of Trevor Griffiths was approaching them up the path, that the rooks were suddenly silent, that her heart paused between its beats, and that the moment for it to beat again was strangely far off. The scent of the flowers seemed to be bearing to her the unspoken messages of heralds. She looked at her father; an inscrutable expression had come into his eyes.

"I, changed!" he repeated.

X.

ON hearing the news, Margaret stopped what she was doing and at once set out towards Glandon. Half way there she returned on her footsteps, came back to the house, took off her hat and coat, and busied herself just where she had left off. On the afternoon of the next day, on her way to the market town, she went to Glandon. She walked up and down restlessly in the big faded room, looked out of the windows with a fixed expression that took in the scenery as an accompaniment to her thoughts, looked at it with the new idea and the past reality forming a confused scene, a regret that was so little tangible that it took only a form of excitement and jostled with her thoughts. As Lady Anne entered, the two women looked at one another for a moment without speaking. Mar-

garet was newly surprised. Lady Anne appeared distressed. The unaccountableness of such an effect of the news on her friend made her feel suddenly that the thing was unreal. That this change in their little world could not be going to happen, but that meantime there was some embroglio on hand in which Sabrina Fairchild was very much the centre.

"They are engaged then?" said Margaret Hughes.

"Yes."

"Well, you meant them to be, didn't you?"

"I thought it would be an excellent thing."

"You don't think so now?"

"Oh! Yes, yes, I do." The good lady sat down and stared fixedly out of the window.

Margaret watched her.

"Well!" she said, a little impatiently.

"He was so persistently opposed to the idea," said Lady Anne.

"Not to her?"

"He seemed to be—that is what is so dreadful. I urged the thing so."

"I suppose at last he wasn't," said Margaret Hughes.

"Oh! one must hope it. Nevertheless, one is uncomfortable. I feel so responsible."

"You need not."

"I am convinced he surprised her to an acceptance."

"Do you think she cares for him?"

"Yes–s, I do."

"There is no earthly reason why he should not care for her."

"No, no. Only I feel certain he just doesn't. I feel as if I had trapped the girl."

"If she wanted to be trapped."

"You don't like her?"

Margaret flushed scarlet. "I like her ab-

surdly much, but I think you are troubling yourself more than necessary."

"My dear Margaret, you don't know—it's simply awful! Good heavens! I wanted him to fall in love with the girl."

"Wasn't that to start with, unreasonable!"

"Pooh! She was much too good for him. He ought to grovel."

"One rather likes him for not."

"Do you like him for proposing to a girl he told me was neither pretty, nor intelligent, nor charming—that there was nothing about her but fine clothes and half an accent."

"You successfully changed his opinion."

Lady Anne laughed, while still holding her eyes upon her friend. "One never does that. One can influence people's actions, and in this case it is rather awful—to have forced him."

"You are wrong, totally wrong. I am certain Trevor is in love with her all the same."

"Wait till you see them together. He is exactly the same to her as he always was, a little more courteous perhaps. It makes one cold to see them together."

"And she?"

"She does not seem to notice that he is not just as he should be. She looks wonderfully happy and a little shy. When he is not in the room her passion shines from her whole countenance. She looks at one as much as to say, *Isn't it wonderful! Am I not happy; he is a king. What can I do to show him how I love him? It is hardly bearable, so much happiness. Why is he so good to me? why, above all things, should he have chosen* ME? One feels that should he return at such a moment she would just go on her knees; one is really absurdly afraid of his approach lest she should. Well! when he comes, the beautiful little head of her goes up, her whole lithe figure straightens, the carmine in her cheeks fades to just a tinge of colour,

the lips, that were trembling, settle perfectly calm. The girl has become a queen. . . She does not make the slightest demand upon him; she exacts nothing and she is happy. . . Of course it is all right now, but if she should ever find out."

"What is there to find out?"

"That he doesn't care for her, that he is marrying her for her money. My dear Margaret, the thing is unthinkable, I am simply sick——"

"How long have they been engaged?"

"Ten days. It seems ten years."

"How did it happen? I mean how—how?"

"Oh, he went off one morning without a word about whither he was going. He did not return till just before dinner. It was dark as he came into the room. He did not go straight up to dress as is his habit, but stood for a moment looking at me. He had the strangest look in his eyes; they just

said, 'It's your fault, entirely your fault.' I felt a cold sense of apprehension creep all over me. 'You'll be late for dinner, Trevor,' I said.

"Then he looked at his watch, and I was certain he did not notice the time.

"'I have done as you wished,' he said suddenly. 'I think you were right. I have asked Miss Fairchild to be my wife.'

"'Good God! Trevor,' I said. I must have turned pale.

"'What's the matter,' he replied, quite startled. 'Didn't you wish it?'

"'Oh! of course, of course, if you care?' I said.

"'I thought you had presented to me that the caring was not essential,' he answered. Then he laughed. 'My dear Anne, don't funk now——" And he strode upstairs—men always stride about when they want to make you out wrong. I believe he was really angry. In the evening he set to

his books just as if nothing had happened. He proposed I should call next day, which I did. Then they both came to dinner on the morrow. I told him I thought Mr. Fairchild rather charming.

"'Vulgar?' he said, and seemed to wait for my answer. I said, 'Not in the least,' and he said, 'I was prejudiced.'"

Margaret laughed, but there remained in her eyes a look of doubt.

"It's all strange, but we are so unused to events here that we take rather ordinary happenings a little too passionately. We depend so much on one another that every one's business becomes intimately one's own, and one's engagement," she ended with humour, "is naturally a vital affair."

The county, not less than Margarat Hughes, found the affair very much its own to discuss. The engagement came as a shock to those who had conceived imaginary unions between their sons and this lady of

the very heavy money bags. Her asserted beauty, her wealth, and her American birth, a fashionable substitute for a more specific genealogy, were together a temptation which sagacious parents took as an undoubted prize brought into their world by a kind Providence for the benefit of any one of their sons. They were conceivably upset on hearing the news, and at once decided that the rather poverty-stricken descendant of so ancient a race could of course have no better motive for seeking the young American's hand than that which had not long since enlivened their own daily dreams, namely, the wealth that it carried. A very shameful motive when divorced from their own righteous plannings. Amazing how shameful an idea, how provocative of sneers, and how persistently asserted as a fact. Flaming cheeks and bulging eyes were everywhere visible—surprise and indignation. Among the girls a little stir, a movement of their

pretty shoulders, a momentary closing of their eyelids at the thought that the good-looking man,—who never came to their parties, and round whom they had woven romance in plenty, since he cared for books better than their smiles; and digging, of all things in the world, better than dancing or hunting,—had fallen to a sister from across the sea, and they too, in some mood of self-compensation found that he surely was marrying her for money. They did not find her pretty, for they found pretty enough faces in their own mirrors to hide hers, or make hers at least seem less real, and after all she was of no birth. "Is she—is she a lady?" they asked one another, with the most well-bred and disinterested tone. One, less of their world, on receiving the news, said, "He will buy pigstyes with her money," and they laughed.

The news spread over the northern end of the island with astonishing rapidity. The

peasants were great gossips; it was indeed their sole recreation. They drove into the gray little town, fifteen to twenty huddled like livestock in a waggon, seated on one another's laps, if must be, and but two horses to drag such a weight. They sat solemnly going into town, gossiping with a certain significant reticence. "If I told all I knew," was visible in their attitude. On the return journey their tongues, however, were amazingly loosened, they had met in the marketplace the occupants of a score of other similarly filled waggons and had exchanged news, and the males at least were well filled with good drink. The opinions of the quality upon this marriage had filtered to them, and the gossips remarked to one another that Griffiths of Glandon was going to wed a strange young woman for the weight of her money bags.

XI.

IT would seem difficult that the idea (his mercenary motive) so commonly held, talked about up to her very gates, impregnating the air, as it were, should not at last reach her, even if only through the filtered way of an impression; and yet the girl for a long time remained impervious to any such influence. The horrid idea, however rampant, could not break through her exultation. He had come unexpectedly to her and asked her to be his wife. She had unhesitatingly answered yes; her heart had quickened with happiness, and then she had experienced an engulfing sense of shyness, one that wrapped up the thought of her happiness so that she dared not know all that it meant to her. She could not tell why, even to herself, she had said yes, and yes in all the haste she could, without a mo-

ment's hesitation, her pulses leaping to it;—or why afterwards she was frightened, and wished in a maiden's way to escape from her lover, to woo him in his absence alone with her flowers. Passion in this girl was extraordinarily withheld. She waited for a lead, wonderfully content to serve. She was not one to believe that her lover (the moment she had accepted him as that) could come in any way but loving. It did not occur to her to place him among the numerous youths who had sought her hand for very obvious reasons. If such a man as he claimed her, surely it was because he loved her. She did not count the times he was cold, but the blessed times he seemed so generously kind. Undoubtedly a reluctant lover would need to shout his disloyalty to this girl or she must only remain perplexed.

Time, however, brought our dreamer to the ground. A little breach in the atmosphere and the thing rushed in upon her,

frightening her to earth. Spiteful rumour took her unawares. She struggled with courage, wounded enough to be kept down. She would not harbour disloyalty. She lifted her head to deny, and her lover remained safe from any utterance of reproach. Nevertheless, after an elapse of six months, doubt, which had been valiantly enough thrust out of her mind, came sneaking back in unexpected guises, a creature only revealed after it had gained admittance; the threshold at last was worn and its imprint remained. She became used to it before she had realised that she had harboured it.

The women of the county sought her society, in a way, to spy. They guessed by her look,—she was hardly the radiant creature she had been,—that she knew something of what they thought, and found it possible to despise her for holding on. Her cheeks were perceptibly paler, the bright, laughing, mocking eyes a little graver, as if the fun had been

startled out of them, and they had not yet seen the cause of the shock. She looked absently at moments, her shoulders thrown back, and her chin raised still in the old way, the queenly movement which had made them feel that nothing but her wealth could make tolerable such a manner, not even her American birth.

The girl had become visibly saddened by a fear, which she would not admit to herself represented any real state of things. She grew, however, more shy of her lover. All their innuendoes were doubtless contemptible, but it might be that such a man did not always need her, also that in some way he may have found her wanting. For what other reason, she argued, did he never allude to their marriage, if somehow there had not come a fear on his side, some waiting to be quite sure? Nevertheless she had her confident moments, times of great happiness; otherwise the strange situation could hardly

have prolonged itself, as it did, over so long a period of time. In everyday life one is apt to be extraordinarily patient with regard to untoward circumstances; only after a culminating crisis do we wonder why for so long things could have gone on in such a fashion. From day to day one cannot see actually how matters are going, the rising grounds of hope obliterate the valleys beyond. All that has been perceived by the reader was not grasped by our heroine. She could not find that her case was so different from usual engagements. An amiable, sweet disposition made her unexacting; and naturally high spirits kept her in some degree from suspicion. The self-confidence peculiar to beautiful woman was hers.

It was during occasional long walks they took together that she experienced some real moments of happiness—indeed the fulness of happiness. He talked wonderfully, revealed the natural world to her till she saw all the

coloured robes of it through his imagery. They climbed the heights together and she felt that the mystery of earth, so different from all that she had known of the world, knit them together in spite of the gossip of the plains, or even in spite of that other personality of him, that other herself, who could be parted down there among people. Were they either responsible for that atmosphere which divided them somehow against their will.

Peculiarly when they made their way up the precipices of the copper mountain and looked down from its scintillating heights across the quiet green plains on which cattle grazed, to the distant range of mountains that were really across the sea, but seemed near, doubts would become ephemeral shadows that had ignobly hung about her. She looked at the striding clouds leaping towards an infinitely becalmed blue over the island, and then to the revelation, in a moment, of

patches of the same blue (he pointed them out to her)—extraordinarily in the distance, like promises repeated to an echo. The mountain they were upon was so rugged and hewn about, dug out to hideous depths; its glistening soil thrown up to such immense spoil heaps, countless human hands having broken into the heart of it and revealed all its wealth to the sky: a magical place with silver and purple, gold and silver-yellow and orange-silver precipices, shining red, glittering blue, copper-green, copper-blue: and rushing down from it a river literally crimson, transparent like wine—that its influence became overwhelming. In so lonely a place they must wander about its rough precipitous paths closer together; in so wild a place that had yet been affected so long by human life—every stone turned over by some toiling wight, who one time or another had lifted a head and looked to those distant peaks for the promise they seemed to hold, that all

earth gives out to him who lives with her: *the reaping to come*—it was impossible not to depend one upon another, and, with the keen air passing through their lungs, to exult in just their companionship in a physical way that could be spiritually ignored.

But they did not see very much of one another alone on other occasions. Trevor was generally with his men on the farm, and Lady Anne, stimulated by a fear that such an affair as their engagement, an ugly outcome of her own plannings, could not be left to itself; that somehow she must protect Sabrina from guessing what had happened; stand by her against Trevor, as it were, whom she was ready to whip for carrying out her own wishes—hovered restlessly in their neighbourhood and took possession of the girl whenever she could.

"She will find it out, you know, if she is much alone with him," she said to Margaret Hughes. "If we could postpone that, he

might grow to care, then there need be no finding out. I am certain" she added, after a moment's pause, "he has never kissed her."

Margaret Hughes coloured. "They seem very good friends," she said half-heartedly.

"Precisely! If they would only quarrel, one might feel something was happening. He is indifferent with so much diffidence one's teeth are set on edge."

Margaret laughed. "If one didn't care for them both so much one wouldn't mind; but she won't find out, you know."

"Not till it is too late, you mean?"

"Oh! he must care at last."

"I don't know; he has never cared. He holds to the one idea."

"How do you mean?"

"That he is marrying her for her money."

"Does he actually say that?"

"You know his way—he says so little, but when he does——"

"When he does?"

"Oh! he might be alluding to some ceremonious betrothal between royalties. He said the other day, 'when this alliance has been contracted in our family.'"

"He was not serious?"

"No he was laughing. Would he laugh if he cared? It was about an immense black bull he wished to buy."

Margaret hardly laughed.

"Can you understand his not loving her?"

"No."

"It isn't much use, after all, being so beautiful and brilliant and wealthy."

"He persists in saying she is only wealthy."

"And she cares so!"

"That is it. I cannot bear that he should know. He must not know she is so wholly his," the good lady went on; "for her sake one cannot bear it. Ah! how she wins one!"

"Yes, she wins one!"

"Heavens! why not him."

"Are you sure she hasn't?"

"He is abominable to her."

"She nevertheless holds him."

"Do you mean he might have got out of it?"

"Men do."

Lady Anne was silent for some moments. "He would never do that." She looked up at her friend and for a moment felt an awful sense of foreboding.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "why does it possess one so? Why does one trouble? He is going to marry a very rich girl, but we know that she is charming, why should it matter?"

"Because," said Margaret hotly, "she *is* charming, because she is beautiful in the most beautiful way, because her personality rises immensely important above her possessions. Her wealth does not count—she it is who is valuable, and his lack of appreciation

is preposterous. He is humbling her—he of all men! One resents it."

"I sometimes feel he is possessed by a kind of passion to tell her the truth," said Lady Anne.

"Do you think it is because perhaps he really cares for her?"

Sabrina came into the room and interrupted Margaret's question by her sudden appearance. The women were not quite sure she had not heard their last remarks. She looked, however, perfectly self-possessed and very beautiful. She wore a lilac gown that seemed to be made of some transparent material, and a wide straw hat that was attached under her dark hair by a gauze scarf that floated behind her.

"You are gossiping. I can see it in both your faces and I love gossip." She looked wistfully at them, so that they both laughed.

"Come and gossip."

"Isn't Trevor in?"

"We haven't seen him."

"I want to steal a book from the library."

"Isn't he to know?"

"Certainly not. I am trying to get learned, you know, and one has to begin at the beginning—one hides one's beginnings."

"Are they serious?" asked Margaret.

"Very! I started with 'The Civilisations of Mesopotamia.' I have reached a lady called Beltis, who was the mother of god and goddess of all learning. They thought something of us in those days!" She crossed the room and disappeared behind the curtains which divided them from the inner hall and staircase. "I suppose I may go?" she threw back to them.

Her young voice echoed through the room, recalling the passing vision of the bright presence, the laughing, mocking girl in her gauzy furbelows.

"It would simply be awful," said Margaret.

Lady Anne got up, she stood still, staring blankly at Margaret as if she were realising how awful it would really be.

"Ah! but—Heavens! we mustn't let it happen."

Sabrina meanwhile when she was alone put her hand quickly up to her eyes for a moment, the action of one brushing away a mental vision, then she sauntered along the deserted, narrow hall towards the library. She stopped at a window that was open, and through which was pouring the afternoon sun, the low rays that show golden and fill one with reflectiveness. Any violent mood is dispelled in their warmth, and one's inclinations seem to go out to all the beauty they so magically reveal—indefinable yearnings break loose and revel in a physical way. The old-fashioned lattice opened outwards. She thrust out her head, leaning her elbows on the sill, that she might drink in a little of so much peace that seemed actually part of

the landscape—a carpet of green stretching to the horizon, the shadows of clouds fleeting across it in patterns, whilst bars of gold caught the rising ground or the backs of the grazing sheep: the shade was blue and only like spaces of colour. A black cat was blinking in the warmth just under the window.

"Oh! Pasht, Pasht," she said, "it's a little tiny world here on this island of ours, and there are very few people, and they have to gossip about me, Pasht, because there is nothing else to talk about: oh! Pasht, I should like to climb through the window and come and sit by you, and then go for a walk over the world with you to Egypt and Mesopotamia."

She drew in her head, and perhaps she might meet Trevor somewhere—a Trevor who would care——

She continued her way to the library, humming a little accompaniment to that journey

in her fancy over the world with Pasht to find the real Trevor.

On the threshold of the room she gave a little exclamation of surprise. He was there among the books, piles scattered on the floor round him, and some new volumes on the table for which he was evidently making place, he was handling, as book-lovers alone know how to handle, some very delicately bound volumes.

"Oh! how nice, how nice," he said, "come and help me; we have outgrown our room. Aren't they beautiful. He binds like a king, this man."

"Why should a king be able to bind?"

"Oh! a king is a man who does everything better than any one else."

She took up one of the books. "Ah! how you love them," she said.

"Oh! they are excellent gossips," he answered.

"But serious books, I mean."

"There are none—unless perhaps a poem, a sermon, or a work of fiction."

"Oh, but history?"

"Scandalous gossip."

"Philosophy?"

"Children's dreams."

"Works of science?"

"Excellent lesson books."

"Ah! but the classics—all this Greek and Latin? We who can't even read it?"

"I think that were those good Greeks alive, they would hasten to learn English that they might read the fiction of Shakespeare and Meredith!"

"Then you do not care for them, after all—you who are so learned and have such beautiful books."

"I care immensely, but there are the things they mean which I care immensely more for."

"But for their own sake?"

He looked up and laughed. "There is no

such thing in the whole of creation! We can care for nothing for its own sake—it is an absurd pose—a meaningless phrase. For the sake of everything every one Thing is."

"I do not think I always understand you. You do really care for books and you pretend you do not. You seem to belittle what you love, and overestimate—"

He looked at her quickly, an odd spasm crossing his face. She saw it and did not lower her eyes. She became conscious that the tips of her fingers were cold; also that a certain reasonableness, a calm power of detaching herself from her own personality and looking on disinterestedly had come upon her, as if the really interesting thing for the moment was just to get the truth from him —even to argue their case.

She loved him, of course, but if he did not love her?—would she then love him at all? Would not things after all be the same as before she came to Glandon.

"You say that you love me," she said simply, "perhaps you do not."

He turned his back upon her, lifting a heavy volume into its place: "Mistress Sabrina, Mistress Sabrina, how badly you are behaving. Are you quarrelling with me?"

The girl laughed, her mood went with the warm ring of his voice. She stooped down and helped him put away the books, and they hobnobbed over them like two wise librarians.

XII.

IT was on returning to Mona Lodge after this hour spent with him, that the burden of all her doubts became monstrously disproportionate. The girl stood aghast before the new thought of the possible sordid level which affairs might reach, if indeed he did not care for her.

She had found her father pacing the walk in the walled garden, in extreme agitation.

He had told her at once whilst she stood there, and she had detected a note of pleading in his voice. He had to repeat several times his explanations before she quite understood, and then it flashed through her, "This was to be the test."

"Do you mean that everything has gone," she said?"

"Everything but your mother's money, which of course is yours."

"Is it much?"

"No, comparatively nothing."

"Will it be enough for us, I mean?"

"That depends upon you. If you wish that I should begin again. I am of course old—how old? seventy—or seventy-one? Well, I might begin again, and I will. In that case we must use some of your capital, but if you cared—well, we might live here, you know. I am rather tired—and then you are to be married." He sat down on a bench, and Sabrina suddenly saw how old he really was.

"How did it happen?" she said.

"Oh, Tom, of course."

"Uncle Tom? Then the bank?"

"Is closed—failed for $20,000,000."

"He has speculated?"

"Yes. Who would have dreamt it?"

He stood up again and abruptly stooping over a flower examined closely its leaves. "Lust for gold horribly outreaches itself, and yet of all desires it becomes the most

spiritual in excess. It can give no tangible gratification—becomes an absurd dream, for after a certain sum such wealth does not exist; it is never seen, never touched, never used by its owner; and yet to gain such a gratification the sanest man—surely brother Tom seemed that—becomes tempted. My dear child, our bank was safe—God! safe as the heavens!"

"Would it have happened had you been there?"

"I have left it all so long to him—I thought him safer than myself!"

There was a long silence between them.

"Well!" he said suddenly. A look of keen anxiety spread over his face as he searched hers for the trace of her coming answer.

She startled him by laughing.

"You wish me to begin again?" he said.

"Well, you see, my obligations are so immense!"

"What obligations?"

"The paying of my dowry."

The old man's eyes blazed.

"I entered into no question of money with Griffiths. I was particularly interested to notice that he himself made no reference to the matter of your fortune."

"My fortune, I suppose, seemed too safe."

"You are surely misjudging your lover."

"You seem angry with me."

His hands were trembling and the look that before had been pleading was now merely one of resistance.

"I am not—I am not in the least. This has been a blow, at the same time, I had hoped that you had found, as I have, the emptiness of the life we have led so far, and the very little pleasure our mountain of gold succeeded in giving us. However you are young—and I will return to New York and begin again if you wish it, or to hell or

anywhere else—damn Tom—damn everything——"

"Damn New York," said Sabrina.

"Really," said the old man, and found it possible to laugh. The girl, however, remained wistful after the swear. Her face was very white, her mouth rounded to an O. She stood immovable. The ejaculation had been caused by the interruption of a momentary consideration among thoughts hastening towards one idea. In this calamity she saw the test hovering—forced upon her. His love was to be measured, proved. She shrank from the thought of it—was there no way out? She would acceptably lose such wealth as had been theirs if only this test should not accompany it. She mentally saw the result and wrestled with her judgment. Should one expect so much from love? We see that in all these months the ideal of it had grown shadowy, hardly an ideal at all, but she clung to it, clung to what she might

have without the test. Gossip had broken down her barriers, she stood alone, and could not face the other side. The heart of her yearned to take for granted what she dared not measure; and yet what she had to grasp, what she must repeat to herself, was that she had no choice; that this awful thing could not be avoided unless her father could, as he had said, begin again. She covered him suddenly with her eyes, and appraised coldly his powers of doing this to any valuable result, but the expression of fear, still visible in his attitude, that she was going to ask it of him, touched her to consciousness of his magnanimity. He was afraid, because he meant to do the thing, if she made any claim. He was pre-eminently American in his sense of obligation towards making beautiful the life of his womenkind. She had seen enough of men in other countries, of fathers and brothers and husbands, to know that in this, at any rate, those of her

race stood superior to the males of the world; she had scented quickly the attitude of England, in spite of the Queen Sovereign, of always uncrowning the woman. There were literary men who had wasted the space in public journals to bespatter with the mud of ridicule any pretensions of her sex to intelligence. She had observed that here too, in England more than elsewhere, her father had not been thought a gentleman, for all the hospitality that was offered him; yet the finer meaning of that word, the one that comprised chivalry, leapt uppermost at this crisis in his view of the position:—and then she saw his age. She threw off the thought of her lover, shut the door vigorously on her own predicament, and turned with him to pace the path and discuss their affairs in such a way as might be all for his sake.

"Have you bought this house?"

He looked quickly up, eagerly about him,

glad that her tone indicated a note less despondent.

"Fortunately, no," he said, "but we can stay on indefinitely, I understand; the place will practically be ours. After your marriage I should be near you—there is money to enable us to live here comfortably enough—the place is an absurd bargain."

"Oh! we must stay," she said, "until you are tired of it."

"I shall not have time to get tired," he said. He flushed with pleasure at her concession. "I was afraid you would want to go off, you know, but your marriage will keep you here."

"You mustn't count upon my marriage; I can stay without that."

"What are you afraid of?" he said, serious again, a look of troubled dismay covering his face. "You do not suppose he is a cad?"

The word stung her.

"That is only theory," she answered, ambiguously. "The world has theories of what a man may or may not do; practically there are other terms to describe man's shortcomings. In this case, at any rate, there could be a whole world of excuse." She turned a little pale, as thoughts of all that might happen flooded back upon her.

XIII.

SABRINA went down to Glandon on the morrow. The walk from Mona Lodge there affected her signally. She started full of fear, anxious to cover the ground quicker than human feet could take her, and tossing in her mind a thousand doubts as to whether she would find him. She tried to think how she could open such a preposterous conversation. "We have nothing left, absolutely nothing. Of course you cannot wish to marry me now." That was how she would like to say the thing, yet doubtless she could not. She became nervous in anticipation. There seemed no way of telling them which would not be awful for her, awful for them. There simply could not be a scene, and yet every manner of putting it must end in this, not of course acknowledged in so many words, but felt

between them all—a blank staring from a lover who had sought out a bride with such a dowry as hers had been. Would she be able to contain herself—to refrain from releasing him there upon the moment, which would so terribly end matters. A humiliating sense swept through her that she could not give him up. A primitive instinct to recognise no possible barrier between herself and her mate, to circumvent material objections with a spiritual sense of possession that could count nothing as too great an effort: this frightened her to a new trouble. Could things count so terribly!

Gradually, however, as she went, a quieter spirit came to her. The country was fragrant after the wet, and very still. It was showing itself all beautiful, and somehow succeeded in wrapping her in its atmosphere of quietude. It was midday and there was no sign of man or woman in the neighbourhood, without the country presenting any

aspect of being deserted: one felt that the world was husbanded here, and the tillers were not very far away. It all conveyed the serenity of a pause; only the birds and creatures and insects seemed about, as if they had taken possession of the world whilst their common tyrant was within doors. The birds flew low, the cattle raised their heads in an intimate way at one another, and bees with their gold and black coats sailed down the centre of the ways, humming their songs to the flowers. The low walls which divided the pasture-lands and cornfields were covered with tiny flowers that patterned the stonework like a dainty embroidery. She came upon a green frog dangerously in the middle of the road, and further on two rabbits hobnobbed freely on an open patch of grass. All this in the hazy heat of mid-day.

Her feet lessened their hurry, and she wondered why she troubled so much to doubt her lover. Why had she been so hastily dis-

loyal? The man she had loved a little while ago had not been one she could have dreamt to be this new person who had grown up in her mind of late. Surely this catastrophe could not make him hateful, it might reveal hatefulness, were it in him, but in that case, surely too, the test would not have been necessary. Such hatefulness must have been conspicuous in manifold ways—it must have touched other traits in him: a man is never wholly ignoble, but such a quality will taint more than one passion and out always more than one way. If he were indeed sordid she must have felt it in him before. Had she been led by the echoes of gossip? She looked at all the scintillating pleasantness everywhere, for the sense of it and the sight of it became one, and her spirits rose: she thought of his love for the sunny earth, and found it impossible to reconcile the man she had thought him, and this new creature of her doubts. The influence of the day grew

upon her, and fronting the great turquoise sky that dipped down to meet the earth at her feet far away on the low levels, the sun-beaten earth all about her undulating downwards, fragrant and coloured at once, as if the two things were different expressions of each other, her senses went out to meet the kindlier belief in him, till in all the warmth and promise of the earth it became a certainty. She reached the winding road by the sea and loitered to peer into its depths over a primitive wayside wall that saved an unwary pedestrian from the shelving cliffs of rock that went sometimes precipitously to the blue inlets here and there of deep water, grass coming to its edge and pink flowers that trailed, almost dipping their petals. Ah! how could she doubt? What egregious mischance had made her do that. She watched some gulls swoop about the blue and then strut up and down a grassy promontory, as if to walk were a most pleasant

luxury. The sight of them filled her with a general sense of peace before she turned with quickened pulses towards the gate that entered the grounds. In a few moments she found herself stepping out of the warm sun into the great shadowy room. She could not see distinctly anything, because of the transition from so much light, to shelter from it. Somehow the coolness was not agreeable, and her heart, that had risen, seemed suddenly to ache and would surely fall in a moment to terrible depths: the physical sensation had to be fought, and for a moment she put her hand to her side, then she laughed. They were both there and she found herself looking at them as if they were people on the stage and nothing to do with herself. Lady Anne in her black furbelows, the humourous dear face having caught something in her visitor's of portent, wore a strange look almost of warning, whilst her lover glanced at her from where he stood

with a smile in his eyes which made her feel for one instant that he was mocking her. She shook hands with them both and knew that she talked for some time about everything and nothing. In a pause she said, "I have some news for you both." She laughed nervously, "It is rather serious news for my father." She emphasised "for my father," in a kind of challenging way. Lady Anne instinctively put out a hand! Sabrina, however, merely smiled back at her. "Oh! it isn't anything *we* will really mind—I mean you two and myself—we who care for this kind of life"—she looked toward her lover —"we who like to till the soil and despise, thoroughly despise"—she did not finish her sentence, for an odd look had come into both their faces. She tried to read it and what it actually meant struck her suddenly: it stopped the words on her tongue. She waited a moment, seeking in the pause for some kind of hope. Her lids were lowered;

she knew they were both scrutinising her, and dared not lift her eyes to tell them. She did not wish to humble her friends by giving them no chance of recovering from the look of self-interest that would surely follow the blow of her news, if it was, as it seemed to her now, that they, like the rest, had calculated upon her wealth.

"We have lost all our money—all, irrevocably;" she said, and looked up at her lover, then drooped her lids. She knew terribly well now. She could not hold her heart then. It went down, down. She did not dare to move, lest she might reveal some hint of the storm of despair that surged within her. She must control herself better than he had, he must not know she had seen the significant expression come over his face and reveal the whole man to her—his disappointment, almost his anger with fate. She was afraid to speak lest her voice might sound strange. Lady Anne did, and the girl found

she could not understand a word she was saying. She tried to listen patiently and then just waited. At a pause she said:

"These things happen to us over there."

"Oh, they happen here," said Trevor.

She laughed.

"I suppose so, only I don't think we mind so much."

"It is impossible not to mind." His eyes were turned to the window and she was able to look at him. His face seemed pale like ivory against the black of his beard, his brows raised in a kind of tired tolerance of an inevitably disagreeable predicament.

"That depends," she said, still watching him, "how much one may have cared, how much wealth may have made a difference. How many intolerable circumstances wealth may have brought one."

He looked at once back to her and spoke with some gentleness in his tone, some spontaneous kindness which touched her

to loving him, though she knew it could mean nothing of passion.

She got up. "I must go," she said. "Of course it has been a blow to my father, more than he will admit. He is so old."

They spoke of her father, and she found herself forgetting what the interview had meant to her and thanking them. Ceremony seemed the greatest necessity of the moment, it took up room, as it were, so that she could think of nothing but that they were kind, concerned at her trouble, needing her to smile a reassurance that she and her father could be reconciled to what, after all, most people in this island seemed to be so well accustomed.

"You are all happy here," she smiled, "but I must go"

She refused an escort, looking frankly at her lover. "I am going to run home. I won't have you desert Lady Anne for lunch."

So that it was she who talked, she who

smiled, and left them blankly looking at her retreating figure. She felt their eyes upon her as she went down the avenue, and only outside the gate, when somehow she was away from their influence, remembrance flooded back to her, cold and engulfing.

XIV.

AFTER Sabrina had left them Lady Anne sat quite still, waiting for her brother to speak. The absurd circumstance, it seemed to her that, mischievously absurd, was sufficiently overwhelming to deprive her for the time of any power to face her brother with a sensible comment. A certain impish feeling of pleasure too, mingled with her consternation, so that she would have liked to say vulgarly, "it really serves you right." He had no excuse for having seized upon her plan and followed it out with so little heart. She had meant heart to be in it. He had latterly developed some sensibility perhaps; he must have, since the girl had proved so charmingly desirable even when the question of pence was ignored, but his attitude as a lover was none the less deplorable.

However it came over her that he was not going to speak, and for the very extraordinary reason that he was furiously angry, white, she perceived, with passion.

"Poor little Sabrina," she said, still watching him, "she deserved better than that of fortune."

He ignored her remark and then said suddenly, "God! what a hole."

"After all," said Lady Anne.

He turned upon her.

"You do not seem to realise the hideous position you have put me in."

The good lady for the moment felt disconcerted, not by the accusation against herself, but by the flashing thought that came to her through his words that her brother possibly would not hold to his bargain. She became nervous and ashamed and angry at once. He could not be such an inconceivable hound: she dismissed the possibility, but nevertheless continued to shy at his tone.

"It is bad luck, Trevor," she said, "nothing else. After all, you care for her."

"I cared for her money, and I should have married her for her money. How in the name of saints am I to buy her clothes?"

"She certainly wears expensive clothes."

"It is an expensive bargain you have made, my dear sister."

"I?"

"Entirely you—you persisted. How you persisted. We trapped the girl—it was a shameful piece of business and this is the logical result."

"Logical?"

"Precisely; vile motives, vile results."

"Trevor, you are talking nonsense."

"What right have we to desecrate a sacrament for our gains? What right had you to foist upon me a decked-out doll for the sake of her well-filled money-bags?"

"How can you speak of her in that way?"

"Speak of her! We can speak of her anyway since we started by degrading her."

"Trevor!"

"Degrading. She has lost her money-bags and we don't want her,—but we must take her, is not that to be degradation for her?"

"Do you mean that you do not care for her at all?"

"I care nothing for her."

"Then I need not say I think you contemptible—you must feel unspeakably so."

"Whose is the fault?"

"Your own. I could not guess that you were so consummate an egoist that such a girl as Sabrina could not have touched your heart, even if you are without the ordinary passions of your kind."

"I have enough passion to despise traffic in women for their money."

"But not enough it seems to resist it."

"That's what it seems." His voice dropped and he looked away from her out of

the window. On the climbing road in the distance, that appeared like a white serpent coiling over the brow of the hill, he saw the girl of whom they were speaking stop for a moment and look back.

* * * * * * *

She was returning home slowly. Through the rush of her thoughts and the sense of stinging shame that seemed to be a physical possession, she found herself looking through a window from her mind to a view of life that revealed the world, a shadowy place where men and women stumbled about, looking for something no one ever found; their ideals seemed only a spiritual accompaniment to their bodies, a presence they chased before them, and which like their shadows were bigger repetitions of themselves and always elusive; so that the big-souled had a big ideal and the crooked-souled a crooked one; each fought for the supremacy of his

own; some preached their own, till the shadow-chasing became a ludicrous race that brought the participants tumbling with their noses to the hard ground. She had done that, and she must pick herself up with all the dignity she could muster. The idea that she should not love this man if he proved mercenary had left her as if it had never been. She knew that she still cared, and that she was going to make the best of a bad matter, a natural reasonableness almost instinctive in her race: the mind that at a crisis looks out for the best to be done, and thrusts to lumber-room the evil that is inevitable.

Fairchild greeted her with a challenge on her entrance. She looked troubled, or, perhaps, only a little tired. He wondered if he had been wrong in his estimate of the man who had seemed so much less interested than most of the youths who had sought to share his wealth through his child, and who had

so far failed to win her, even when his consent had been theirs.

"They were all kindness," she said.

"He did not return with you?"

"Oh, no! I would not allow him. He was rather disconcerted, you know."

"Disconcerted?"

"It was not very good news I had to tell."

The old man looked at her.

"In justice to him we must both remember that; but we must not exaggerate his concern. Suspicion will take hold of us and then our trouble will be endless," he said.

She took off her hat and slipped off her gloves, her fingers trembled perceptibly as she did so. "Still," she said, "we must not think too much what we want to think." They went in to lunch. She looked at the shining silver and glass on the table as she sat down and toyed with the stem of a wine-glass.

"It will all have to go, I suppose."

Fairchild pursed up his lips.

"What is not yours."

"Is anything mine?"

"A considerable amount."

"Oughtn't I to give it up?"

"No, it is too little to help matters, but in any case you will be in your rights."

She leant her head upon her hand. "Well, we have to live. If one is too scrupulous, things become ridiculous. By the bye, I shall of course break off my engagement."

Again Fairchild looked uneasily at her.

"It is only common fairness to Trevor," she went on.

"You know best," he said.

The girl felt a chill at his assent. It seemed another step towards making real the ugly situation. She experienced a sudden emotion that would have expressed itself, had she given it vent, in a torrent of denial against their sordid point of view

and a passionate questioning—we love one another, trouble has come to me, is he to forsake me then? Does caring count nothing? What preposterous nonsense are we talking—thinking! But life was greatly made up of preposterous nonsense, on all sides of one, and it was her turn to feel the tragedy of it with good humour. She found herself saying inwardly, "I shall get used to it."

They were silent for the rest of the meal, viewing mentally the new life that was to be theirs and looking back to certain episodes of the past that immense wealth only could have procured them; the past was patterned as it were with these, and they did not seem in retrospection to form anything very enviable, very worthy; only some of the things they had not done, dream things the wealthy never do and the poor always imagine they would do, were they wealthy, pressed enviable pictures before them of possibilities irretrievably lost; so that the loss of what might

have been, rather than what had been, brought wistfulness to their eyes—to the girl's especially, as she leaned her head on her raised fingers—the beautiful, tender face, and looked before her, the accompaniment of a heart's pain rising through the song of the past to emphasise the lacking of any new heritage. She looked covertly at her parent, and saw the bewildered, perplexed expression of old age meeting trouble passively. She watched his fingers as he stretched out a hand to take some fruit from a dish. He selected the largest pear and slowly peeled it. She could not eat herself, and wondered if he were really going to eat the enormous thing. She became fascinated as he cut the fruit in halves and quarters with his knife and fork, and watched one by one the huge pieces disappear. His mouth was drooping and melancholy; his heavy lids lowered. He looked very old; she reproached herself for giving him unnecessary pain.

Later in the day she went to write a letter to Trevor. It was her first love letter. She looked at the clean page and thought of this; then she pressed her cheek down on the table against it and cried.

Next morning there was a great stirring out of doors. It was another day all sunshine, with a breeze that met one in the face fragrant and cool, and every one wanted to be at work in a noisy kind of way. For a week it had been wet. The fine weather had surprised one the day before into little else but a stretching of legs, as it were, and meeting to gossip: business had begun again, and such an air set one's pulses beating to be up and doing. Her father was out and called to her. She went down to him in the garden and he pointed out some fresh green that was just pricking through the mould, the very brightest tips of colour. He had sown the things and was beside himself with pleasure at the sight of them.

The two set about to garden; they talked of their affairs, as they did so, with the dispassionate speech of persons occupied as they talked, the interruption of their work giving the pauses that assured time for reflection, or to grant a wanted turning of the page. The ruined old man and the disillusioned girl, holding her broken heart together proudly enough, were rather pathetically keeping one another from any too despondent summing up of what really waited for them in the future. The girl, too, did not divine the strength of the new passion that had taken hold of her father for the life they were leading. What seemed to her superb courage in him, reacted upon her, so that she found herself insisting inwardly that neither the loss of a mountain of gold, nor the possession of a broken heart was a serious matter.

"Ah!" she said suddenly, sitting back on her heels after a long silence. She was on her knees over some weeding, reluctantly loosen-

ing so much that seemed like beautiful flowers, blossoms with the tiniest of pink faces playing maids of honour round the stately plants, whose triumphant colours made patterns amongst the profusion. "You must tell Trevor," she said. "I tried to write last night. It seemed an impossible thing to write. Say that I of course consider our engagement cancelled; that of course under the circumstances you could not think of allowing things to continue—anything, as long as he understands. He said he would come in to-day."

"But if he persists."

"Oh! he won't persist."

"Well, I will let him off, but if he does not persist I shall knock him down."

A shadow of a smile crossed her face.

"He will probably persist a little, you know—enough for good manners." Then she dived away from the subject. In the afternoon they were together again. The

girl was alone, then her father joined her. The interview had been got through. She watched his face as he approached, and a sudden sense of anxiety made her wish she might escape from hearing what had passed. He went to the point, however, at once.

"He persisted. He won't be dismissed."

The girl flushed crimson.

"And what do you think he really meant?"

"Heavens! that he meant at any price to keep you."

"Or that he meant at any price to do the right thing?"

"He is coming to see you this afternoon."

"That I may make it plain."

Fairchild looked at the girl anxiously.

"Sabrina, why do you think so extraordinarily about him?"

"Is it extraordinary that I should think a man who had proposed to a girl with immense wealth, a man who himself was not

well off, should hold back when he learns she is to have nothing."

"But he does not hold back."

"That is what is so terrible; he cannot, however much he may wish to."

"I don't understand."

"I was speaking of his disinclination."

"Why take for granted that?"

"He wanted my money, not me, but at last he became frightened and would have given up even the money to be rid of me. He was so very near it, then this thing happened and he is helpless. We must do it."

"You are absurdly mistaken."

"Ah! if I were!"

"You are, my child. I am convinced you are mistaken."

Sabrina recognised in his tone the faintest inflection of doubt. She knew he was not sure of what he said, and gradually as they sat there in the sunlight, silent at last,

she felt hope flicker as it were, leap to an effort, and then go out.

They went on with their gardening again, the old man, better than she, was able to throw off the oppression of the dilemma. His child in her beautiful furbelows was not a maid to be jilted, and if so—if so, the nightmare would pass; she was very young, there were men left, men enough of another calibre more worthy—he thrust his trowel in and out of the earth and became absorbed in the fragrant present that concerned flowers and loose mould.

When the maid announced that Mr. Griffiths was in the drawing-room, she got up, and with a tired movement went to the house.

XV.

THE engagement was not broken. Sabrina had come into the drawing-room to make her lover understand that it must be; she meant to explain as directly as possible that she herself was serious in insisting upon the impossibility of their marriage, but the moment she entered the room all her courage and logic left her; all that she meant to say seemed something very ignoble and senseless. He met her gravely, for a moment retained her hand, but made no allusion to his conversation with her father. She struggled to draw him towards it and signally failed. How to find words to frame his dismissal? The only thing she had to say must attribute to him despicable interestedness. How could she face him with such an assumption? Might he not reasonably enough protest more than

she could bear—find it possible to scorn her.

"I suppose we shall feel the difference later," she said, "but neither my father nor myself, I think, has wholly realised the immense differences there will be."

"Your father is wonderful."

"I don't think he has ever cared for the things wealth piles upon one."

"You care?" he said.

"I? practically, I suppose very much; theoretically, not at all."

He laughed. "You must reverse it. By the bye we have a visitor coming" he added, again diverting the subject. This was her last effort. She had to throw off her seriousness, put away, at any rate for the time, the horrid necessity. He had sat down by her side on the couch, their shoulders touched. He had a book upon his knees, illustrated with elaborate replicas of antiquities, some finely coloured, and as he

turned the pages between their talk, he drew her attention to their significance, so that the book that had always seemed preposterously dull to her became a wizard's mirror of enchantment. That was always his power, to make things attractive, to make things seem of moment; if he were not charming—charming one would mean in a personal way—life seemed charming when he was there. The magic he threw over her during the walks they went together came through this capacity of eliciting interest with so few words: unnoticed things leapt to significance: a dull world teemed suddenly with meaning. This was the companion she was to give up. Did loving matter so very much? She watched his profile with a beating heart as he looked down at the book. He was the most interesting human being she had ever met; there were so few people who were interesting in any way. She knew little of all that he knew, all the

learning that was attributed to him, yet she felt that her own intelligence was not contemptible since she had in a way measured his: the sense of a helpmate was in her, the yearning of a boy for his master. Ah! if she might have been a boy! If she could only give him some token of the friendship of her passion, the comradeship. She had the feeling, hardly expressible to herself in words, that sex kept them apart. She was to him a feminine thing in pretty clothes, to be humoured: a young woman to be married; at first because she had an enviable dowry, and now because with the frailer sex contracts, in spite of all things, must be kept; as if the irreparable wrong of not loving were not the greatest humiliation inflicted. She had it in her heart to say, Ah! jilt me, sir, if you will, only let me love you just simply in this way.

She tightened her fingers in their clasp.

"Who is your visitor?"

"Allan Howard: an excellent fellow, mad to be a farmer. His family wish him to enter the diplomatic service, they have interest; he persists however, and is coming to dig with me. His letters are wonderful, full of enthusiasm."

"A disciple?" she said; her voice sounded tired.

"Oh, he'll teach me everything, everything."

"Tiresome, then?"

"Oh no, he's always so right, so good-tempered, and so young. One is absurdly pleased to have him teach one, he does it like a child showing you how to play some game of its own."

"You will be a great deal together?"

"All the time. We have got to save the farm."

"Save the farm?" She raised her brows.

He did not look at her. He had not meant to express the significance of his

words, the thing had slipped out, and for the moment he was embarrassed.

She realised that this was an opportunity, but the thought that came to her at his words crowded out all others. He had needed her money so much more than she had known; the thing made her cold, it came brutally to her, the great importance she had been to him, and the little, the terribly little importance she was to be now. She got up from her place and moved restlessly about. Then her father came into the room.

Trevor at once said:

"I have been telling Sabrina how we are going to make a fortune out of the farm."

For one instant the girl levelled her meaning into the eyes of her lover: challenged him. "Ah, why do you lie?—Why do you lie all the time?" she threw into her look at him. He met the challenge as if a little surprised. "I am doing my best," he

seemed to answer. "How have I offended you?"

Later she tried to understand what power it was that this man possessed which enabled him to carry with so little effort his point: to make one by a simple chivalrous manner ignore that it was never that of a lover. If lovers for all time had wooed differently, if indeed *he* did not woo at all, she had to recognise that he successfully held her chained, voluntarily chained. At those moments when it seemed imperative that some understanding must be reached, he was so quietly charming that the necessity evaporated, and she found herself wondering what was the dilemma. He had been neglectful, but even that had only been in absence from her: his day was so full. If he was a cold lover, he was at any rate a warm companion. The difficulty somehow each time was bridged.

Meanwhile the world watched spitefully. Ordinary folk will have such things go as

they conceive in the usual way, and when matters do not, they are at once on the scent for a cause. They had condemned the girl when she was rich, as a parvenu; they condemned her now because she was poor. She was holding to the bargain. Obviously Griffiths wished himself well out of it—was too chivalrous to withdraw. Doubtless the girl had no pride. They were adventurers, these Americans. Probably never had any wealth—and heavens! her dresses! Gossip went spinning the round.

Callers came thickly enough after the catastrophe. It must not be thought that sympathy was lacking. Good manners necessitated some outward show of good feeling, and many of the neighbouring folk really went with some heart; yet their visits dated the falling off—the duty once performed no one, somehow, remembered to repeat it. There was no actual intention to give the cold shoulder to excellent persons they had already

received with open arms; on the contrary, sundry invitations were promptly issued after the visits, but they too somehow ended hospitality. Sabrina and her father were dropped in the kindest of ways; at any rate from the intimacy of those who had welcomed them with so much effusion. However these people lived far away, and the two did not immediately feel that any difference in the world's friendliness towards them existed.

The thing came upon the girl some time later, and then it only seemed part of the whole failure that she meant to have courage enough to despise.

Fairchild went to London; on his return the carriages and horses were sold, and the servants discharged. There occurred some difficulty with Sabrina's maid, Susan, a slender indomitable spinster, who had seemed old until she was middle-aged, and then miraculously, when nearing fifty, she

fluttered into a kind of youth, as it were, which remained with her, and became a vanity that daily brought her gratification. She looked judgments at her juniors, and prophesied stoutness and incapacity at an early age when any over-youthful exuberance in them disturbed her sense of propriety; and somehow she seemed, in her queer soul, to possess the power to make them become just what she elected to foretell, since she seemed to hold the secret of putting off her years on to others.

Susan would not take her notice.

"Ah! but, Susan, understand," said Sabrina, "we have no money left, I cannot keep you."

"You cannot do without a maid. Some of the others must go!"

"All of the others."

A look of consternation came over the woman's face.

"All?"

"We keep Jane, she wishes to stay, and Thomas for my father."

"Only Thomas and Jane! Who is to cook?"

"Jane or Thomas or myself."

The little woman ignored the "myself." "Neither of them can cook," she said, miserably.

"It can't be helped, Susan."

"I would stay for twenty-five pounds," she offered with a final expression, as if now the matter were finished and that they need discuss it no more. She had been receiving thirty-five. She turned on her heel.

Sabrina laughed. "It's very good of you, but unfortunately we can't afford ten pounds, much less twenty-five."

The little woman was now thoroughly upset. "It isn't fair, Miss Sabrina." Then she said suddenly, with a rather ghastly look of determination, "Well, I suppose I must go."

The good woman packed her things, grumbling dismally. Sabrina laughed at her to hide the moisture in her own eyes. She was parting with such a good friend.

On the morrow a fly rolled from the door with the little stiff woman, very pale, seated among her boxes—an extraordinary accumulation of them—defiant of tears to the last.

Sabrina waved a handkerchief as the vehicle turned the corner, then she went towards the stables. The horses were to go too, another good-bye—her own mare, her father's cob, the carriage pairs. Her thoughts ran over them and the look of their soft eyes came to her, so that only because she was a brave young lady she did not howl outright. She hastened to the stables. The yard was deserted, not a single groom about, and the doors of the loose boxes were open. She peered in with beating heart—one stall after another—they were all empty. She came back to the house with a pathetic look

in her eyes, and her mouth screwed to submission.

An hour later the fly returned up the avenue with all the boxes still piled upon it and the little woman in their midst, as pale and resolute as when she left. There was no one to receive her. She ordered the man to put down her immense boxes, sent him away and entered the house.

"Heavens, Susan! what has happened!"

"Oh! please don't say anything, Miss Sabrina. I will stay without wages."

"Susan, you cannot."

She looked very calmly at her young mistress. "You know perfectly well everything will go to rack and ruin without me."

"But, Susan, without wages, how!"

"I have saved," interrupted Susan, "I saved for a rainy day."

"My dear Susan, for your rainy day—not mine."

"I don't understand you. My leaving

you is a very rainy day to me. I knew that as I was getting into the train; the guard was hustling me in, for I hadn't the heart to get in till the last moment. Here is a rainy day, I said to myself. Providence may not send me another chance. The moment I was in, I got out."

Sabrina stared at the faithful little woman and stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth. She was trying not to cry, to ignore the tears that were raining down her cheeks. She blurted out irrelevantly:

"Oh! Susan, the horses are all gone!"

"Poor Miss Sabrina."

"I say—but, Susan, you can't stay, you know—it is madness."

"Mr. Fairchild let your mare go."

"It had to be."

"Well! you will be married soon, Miss Sabrina."

"I am only engaged, Susan. Who knows——"

The maid glanced sharply up at her mistress and a look of real dismay spread over her face. She seemed to seek something to say and then merely murmured:

"The horses couldn't help going."

The enigmatic remark spread its meaning like a shroud before the girl's mind to cover the lover of the past.

"They are more faithful you think than men, Susan."

XVI.

ALLAN HOWARD came with his audacious personality to strike a fresh chord in the life at Glandon, and in an intimacy with Sabrina to reveal to the girl's mind all the hopelessness of her case. He brought his frank worship of Trevor with his books and other things; at least, that was how one felt about it, the boy's admiration was a possession, he kept it with him, as it were, whilst he besieged his friend with arguments and instructions and propositions which for the first few days were tolerated as excellent talk, and then deliberated upon in actual seriousness: Trevor found himself drawn into the boy's ambitious schemes for scientific farming. The youth had walked over the whole estate, alone, the first morning after his arrival and taken copious notes. On the third day he went the same round

with Trevor. Lady Anne perceived on their return that Allan was immensely excited, and that his excitement had reached her brother. They talked without ceasing through the whole meal.

"You waste too much land on pasture—the same number of beasts could be fed on raised stuff from a quarter the area—but we must have more hands."

"I know," said Trevor, "and more capital to pay wages."

"Not a bit, we'll make the capital. I am an extra labourer anyhow." He thrust his hands in both his pockets and laughed. Then he sat upright and again went through his notebook, throwing out calculations that at last reached amazing results.

"How long will you keep to it?"

"Ah! you won't get rid of me soon. By the bye you must sell those fields."

"I hoped we needn't have done that."

"You have had an offer?"

"Yes."

"Sell them at once, we want their money's worth just now.

"I hate to let the land go."

Allan looked at his friend, paused a moment and then said:

"The lease of Evans' farm will be out in three years, then it will be for sale—it joins your land at a far more convenient place than these fields—better land too; the farm is too small to get any kind of price—I understand it originally belonged to this estate—you must buy that."

Trevor laughed. "You are magnificent. How on earth do you get hold of all your information?"

The youth threw down his notebook. "Three days' work."

Trevor looked at it in amused contemplation, then he thrust his hand through his companion's arm. "Come along, let's go and look at Evans' farm."

Mother Earth

Margaret Hughes was startled in the afternoon by a stone coming through the open window of the sitting-room and falling just at her feet. She was sitting for once idly, her mind lazily tracing out the things she must do before she could get her little packing done and really be started on the journey she must needs travel, for pleasure's sake, up into the hills to visit some farmer cousins. It had always been a pleasure to go and she did not really feel reluctant, only a little as if she wished the journey might be something different for this once, or perhaps even more that she might be a different person for one dream day. She found herself bustling, in the new character, through adventures that were exciting and picturesque, and that really did happen to other people in the world; why not just once to herself? This was the limit of a possible melancholy mood with Margaret, a few minutes of idle dreaming, the faintest breath of intangible desires,

the faintest movement of regret just stirring her spirit.

She knew it must be Allan who had thrown the stone. No one but Allan would do that. She did not at once rise, and, unaccountably, the thought of Sabrina came to her mind. She got up slowly and stood for a moment looking down at it, then she went to the window. He was standing outside, and not having received any answer to his signal was looking about to discover her. She watched him for a moment, his young figure silhouetted on the green in the full sunshine, then came out of the funny little door which it had struck Sabrina, could not possibly open, and remaining on the narrow flight of steps waited for him to turn.

"Ah! Miss Margaret, there you are." He strode quickly up to her.

"You have come back to us," she said.

"I told you I would."

"That was a very long time ago."

"Well, but here I am. Will you come out? Do come out. I am intoxicated with the dear old island again; it is so primitive and beautiful, I feel actually young. Let us go down to the shore and along the path up the cliffs far away to nowhere."

"You are not grown up yet."

"I am, really."

She laughed, and went in to fetch a hat. She rejoined him a moment afterwards, and they went down to the sea together, then up a steep path to the heights. The world about them was scintillating in light. The long grass at their feet on either side of the mossy track trembled perceptibly with the heat, and the flowers that tessellated the ground were coloured with wonderful brightness, every blossom was haloed it seemed.

"I am so glad to be here again," he said. "It is such a magic place, and you are all so good to one. Fancy! I have come to stay. Think of it after London, or even after Lon-

don in the country-place—for that is what it has come to in the old places. Here one feels suddenly free, free from too much civilisation—or, perhaps, from too little."

"You mean we allow you to throw stones in at our windows instead of insisting upon your properly knocking at the door."

He laughed.

"Symbolic of a thousand trivial freedoms that go to making one happy," he said. "To be free to throw a stone for whatever purpose one may wish! Woman will never attain perfect emancipation until she can learn to throw a stone, or anything like real happiness. Look how it will skim over the water, dip, to rise and throw up little splashes that give a sense of cooling the air—then it dives—a circle spins round, another and another, till a message is carried over a whole ocean, and the universe echoes to the action of mighty man. Know how to throw a stone, and a Goliath falls, or lives are

saved from shipwreck; know when, and false ministers and high commissioners get to trembling behind their windows, and a revolution is on your heels, or a beautiful lady comes down from her bower."

"Or an impertinent boy gets a thwacking."

"And learns his place, Miss Margaret, I suppose." He picked up a stone and set it sailing through the blue an immeasurable distance above them: it gleamed at its highest and flashed a message before the magnificent dive to join its fellows again far beneath the sea.

Margaret laughed the laugh that is just indicative of a sense of physical joy. "You throw beautifully," she said.

He linked his arm in hers in an intimate boyish way. They were good friends enough, and nothing in the world else apparently.

"If you knew how dreadful London is just now," he went on. "Our women are terrible; their hair is bright crimson and

tortured into bulging fantastic frames to their faces; their faces are painted and look like masks, and their lips are scarlet. They are wanton; and those who are not, whom God made pure enough, try to look so—innocent eyes putting on a leer—they assume vice as an affectation. Our sweet women are turning into flaunting creatures; their bodies covered with jewels, their persons hung with precious chains that almost reach to their knees—they strut in sable and ermine worth hundreds of pounds, and strings of pearls in daylight; their skirts of gauzy materials, costly like cloth of gold, trail about their feet. They are clever and learned, and cluster together to do charity, and their portraits are in all the papers." He looked out to the sea. "They are not wicked, you know—but, heavens! they are not good—these arrogant creatures living in the heart of the city, flaunting in the thoroughfares, whilst all the terrible want and misery closes round them, increasing

and increasing, leaving them hardly room for the swish of their trailing skirts. And one sees them growing old under those furbelows; their faces appear to be visibly shrinking behind the masks of paint: one imagines the body at last like a shrivelled kernel in a shell of stiffening clothes encrusted with jewels. Ah! it's frightening. And these are not the condemned, you know. Heavens! what will be the account at last?"

"Do you think there will be an account?"

A humourous expression came over his face, he turned to Margaret with a look of assumed seriousness. "I think, Miss Margaret, the clothes at any rate will have to be cast into eternal flames."

"Oh! that's monstrously unfair."

"Ah! you are like the rest."

"I never had a beautiful gown in my life."

"That is why you are so beautiful."

Margaret threw out a look of good-tempered malice, she would have liked in a

friendly kind of way to have his blood. She knew of her homely appearance. She did not dream of the real meaning of his words.

"You wait until I beautifully adorn myself," she said in challenge.

"Clothes wither a woman's soul, and her body lives on as a mechanical prop to so many draperies."

"You are wrong—a well-dressed woman is a generous woman—it is the world's experience of her, an amiable woman, a gracious woman."

"Superficially perhaps! At heart she is grasping, affected, cruel, and at last she traffics."

"That is an economic question. Clothes are expensive."

"Oddly enough so are all spirit-destroying things. But oh! you know it is the waste that is so deplorable—wasted wealth is wasted food: irreparable treading down of

the corn. That is why its effects are so terrible—children must starve whilst the waste piles up—there is no return for a destroyed silk gown worn for a day—no return for the weeks' labour to insert the countless stitches—the price paid is a value that is never produced, money is merely circulated round and round and the world thinks it benefits. What a crazy world, Margaret! One wonders why a revolution does not come, and an awful revolution!" He threw up his head and looked back to the sea again. "Sometimes one thinks one hears its hurrying feet—moving all over the world! But to what end? Violent or peaceful? Surely the workers of the earth are the earth's inheritors—the makers of its things. The hands that labour, they are bound to seek their heritage."

Margaret did not answer. Allan would talk. Surely Revolution and even wasteful living were things that reached beyond any

life they experienced here. They wandered along the narrow path, winding in and out of the bracken over the knobbly shoulders of the jutting cliffs that sloped complacently to calm deep water. The boy swung in his walk, taking deep breaths of the soft air, holding no thought in his mind very long, for his emotions were challenged all the time by the fragrant coloured wooing world around him, and the inexpressible thoughts that hurry into one helter-skelter through the senses to the mind, physically touching the soul, leaping then to spirit, melting again through the body like a cool rippling wave that leaves one warm to the sun. He stopped now and then to peer down sharper edges of rocks holding Margaret a prisoner. or hurried her with him. His talk and the physical mood of him possessing him together.

"You know," said Margaret, after a si-

lence, "we have one of your beautiful ladies here."

"No!"

"Her hair is not crimson and she does not paint and she is very young—but her clothes!"

Allan laughed. "My dear Margaret, they are contagious."

"You champion her so soon?"

"Not a bit, only you said she was so young."

"She used to dress like a fairy masquerading."

"Used?"

"Her father has lost all his money. They were extravagant clothes that wore out in a day, so that she has become like a flower fading; only her face remains lovely."

"Oh! Miss Margaret, what a strange image. I believe I am tremendously sorry for her. How could you invent such a picture? One longs to give her new frocks

again. Who is she? How has she come to our island?"

Margaret stopped in her walk and caught her breath. She looked oddly at her companion. "But you knew we had some one here. You knew that—?" she hesitated on the word, then broke off with a kind of shake of her person and walked on abruptly. She had been going to say, "You knew that Trevor was engaged," when it leapt to her mind that Trevor had not told him, and that he had intentionally not told him. The thought bewildered her. Allan saw her hesitation, saw the expression of surprise in her wide-open eyes.

"What?" he asked. "What did I know?"

She gave the curious movement with her hip like a ship in roll bearing suddenly over, and which affected one as the turning of a course upon a subject as it were; or the shutting of a door upon it.

"Oh, nothing," she said, "I thought you knew about Miss Fairchild." She coloured suddenly and stopped again, her eyes arrested by some one before her. Allan looked ahead and saw Trevor, who appeared over the shoulder of the cliff just in front of them. He had on a blue linen coat such as the labourers wore, and his trousers were tied at the knee. He was leading a young black heifer which had strayed. His handsome face was burnt ivory colour: his close dark beard that grew naturally to a point repeated the wave in the very short hair. Margaret found herself thinking of the whole physique of the man as he neared them. The broad forehead with the peaceful brows, the strangely reticent eyes, dark with the quality of shadow rather than of colour, then the massive athletic figure in the rough clothes that followed every natural curve of the body. Was it conceivable that this man was mean? This man who suggested so

much that was simply strong and helpful. Was he after all going to back out? Was it to be in such a man's record that he had thought of making use of a young girl to better his fortunes, and was to cry off because she had lost her money? Surely the thing was impossible. But why hadn't he told his greatest friend of his engagement? She could conceive only one reason; and thinking of Sabrina in her faded gowns, with the beautiful young face that had become shadowed by the faintest look of sadness, this strong-hearted sweet girl about whom the world was gossiping, whom he of all men should have championed,—a hot flood of indignation swept through her.

They had both stopped, waiting for Trevor to meet them. He was up to them now, and she turned to Allan.

"Oh! you think that London only holds what is contemptible, that the human heart is ugly there and beautiful here, that a

painted woman or an idle man denote the greatest degradation. There may be men and women, in your praised country, mean beyond all comparison, with shrivelled hearts or no hearts, not even enough for good manners, and whose wearing of shabby clothes may hide as much lust for gold as your furbelows and immaculate coats, and a simple life may be the excuse for abominable conduct."

Trevor stood listening to her; a troubled look came over his face. He did not appear to think she meant her description for him, but it seemed as if her words touched some chord of self-accusation. The moment the girl had finished she felt suddenly ashamed. She felt her vehemence to have been rather ridiculous, but more than that she had been worrying like some mean little animal, impudently snarling, a troubled fellow creature wholly her superior: it was Trevor she was so absurdly treating! He appeared to her as

a free creature helplessly caught in some net, and she, ignobly enough, was giving him the lash.

Allan had taken her words merely as a continuation of their talk and laughed joyously. "You are magnificent," he said. "Trevor, come and support me against her. I am wholly right and she is mischievously wrong, but she sounds right."

"Oh, she is right." said Trevor, with an absent look towards the animal he was holding. "Miss Margaret is always right."

The girl turned on her heel. "I must go; I must get back," she said. "I haven't packed and I am going by the six o'clock train."

"Going!" echoed Allan.

"Only for a short time, a week perhaps. I will fight you both when I come back," she said, with a return of her charming good-humour.

The men uncovered as she stood on a ris-

ing piece of ground and looked down at them, she looked for a moment, in an odd, half-wistful, half-affectionate way at Trevor. He remained with his hat in his hand till she disappeared, then the two men climbed up the cliff to the winding road along its edge.

Trevor carried a switch with which now and then he touched the sleek black-coated heifer that ambled before them.

"Margaret Hughes is like a young witch," said Allan suddenly, "those odd brown eyes of hers seem to look all the world's secrets at one—secrets her mouth will never reveal. She does not consciously know them, but she becomes wise through them. Why should a wise woman suggest so much less of the conjuror than the wise man? So much more of infinity? The man becomes a sorcerer, and must have a skull cap and fur on his gown, thin hands, and a laboratory: A sybil, just wise eyes." As he spoke his glance rested on the blue line of the distant

mountains, perceptible only through an opening of the undulating plains of pasture land; they repeated the blue of the sea in the cleft of the green land. "Margaret on a broom," he mused, "a young witch would be nothing out of place in this magic scenery."

XVII.

MARGARET'S description of the beautiful girl in her faded gowns recurred constantly to the young man's mind. It was so charming and pathetic, so much a vivid picture which appealed to the senses, that the imagination could not rid itself of the subject, and between pity and humour played a wondering spectator. He found himself thinking of the young girl suddenly at a loss on discovering that her exquisite clothes were not to be renewed, he saw her fading draperies falling about a person which remained beautiful and fresh—a young, wistful face peeping from under drooping feathers—a stray worldling come to their island, deprived suddenly of wealth's accompaniments, and opening wide eyes at the wonderful lack of their necessity here: nature gradually stealing a march, and holding her beauty in surer

hands than those of the court coiffeur and furbelow maker.

It happened on the following day that he was to see her at a moment when he had forgotten this mental picture of her. He was seated with Trevor smoking, outside on the lawn, after lunch, discussing eagerly their plans. They had had a morning together of work that had reassured them of certain necessary innovations. He was not in any way thinking of her when she appeared at the end of the avenue, and did not at first associate her with the forlorn little maid Margaret had described.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "who is this?"

"It is her clothes," said Trevor.

"What's her clothes?"

"The effect; I felt like that when I first saw her."

"She is the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Her dresses are the most expensive."

Allan looked at Trevor in amazement. There was no malice in the tone of this cold criticism, not even a note of cynicism. The remark came from his companion merely as a statement, and he had not time to ask him further what he meant before she had come up to them. Both men got up, and then only, Allan remembered Margaret Hughes' picture of the beautiful girl. Trevor moved a few steps forward to greet her, before he turned and said, "Mr. Allan Howard, Miss Fairchild." The young man made a remarkable bow: it was even less of an inclination than the usual conventional English salute, but the admiration in his eyes and the retention of the formal attitude, till Sabrina wondered if she ought not to bow all over again to bring his to a termination, were beautifully reverent.

Lady Anne came up at the moment, looked at the two, they were of an age, and inwardly reflected that this should bring Trevor to his

senses. They all moved back to the chairs and remained talking, just in that charming English way in the summer afternoon on a lawn, when quite strangers can become successfully interested in one another almost to intimacy without effort or obligation. Allan Howard was silent at first, but after a little while, during which he never took his eyes off Miss Fairchild, he began to speak of America—he had been there. He spoke enthusiastically, which could not but be pleasant to the exile, and then the stream of his wonderful talk flowed, wonderful because it was the talk of youth, full of criticism, life, admiration, generalisations of amazing audacity, fun, enthusiasms, all the oratory of an exceptionally clever boy, spoken to win favour before the most lovely woman he had ever seen.

To Sabrina it was like wine; her cheeks flushed and her eyes brightened, she talked happily, speaking of her country with a little

loving satire that pricked the boy to further assurances of its claims.

Trevor left them after a little while: he went silently, so that Sabrina only perceived his absence on turning her head to repeat something her companion had said. A momentary expression of disappointment crossed her face, and then a sudden flush suffused her cheeks as her glance, in returning to Allan, caught the significant stare of Lady Anne at her brother's retreating figure. The good lady's eyes were capable of greater license than her tongue. The girl bridled.

Why did every one so emphasise things? She might have forgiven Trevor's going, but Lady Anne brought it so home, forced her to see his neglect, and therefore to resent it, and she was trying so hard to ignore the tiresomeness of things. But if Lady Anne did this, was she not right? The girl threw off the question with an almost physical retraction. Must she always be questioning?

In truth Lady Anne's disapproval was recklessly apparent, and she took her line. She had done her best to shield the girl from the consciousness that her brother was so deplorably little what he should be, but she would not act dragon to such a contemptible keeper. At her opportunity she left them too. If this charming boy, who was manifestly in love at the first glimpse of Sabrina, and who was rich and of good family, came in and took her from under their noses, Trevor would simply have his due.

They talked till sunset.

"You are not like an Englishman," she said, as she rose to look about for her hostess, "nor an American."

"I was thinking that," he said, a little shyly, "of you: we are ourselves, we have conquered nationality." The intimacy of the *we* held them looking at one another.

"Isn't it nice to be conceited?" she said, "I had lost all feeling of it over here."

"Aren't the people here simply charming to you? Because if they are not, we will destroy the island."

"But the island is so beautiful!"

"Isn't it! isn't it! But who is not nice to you?"

She laughed.

"Won't you take for granted a moral improvement on my side?"

"Oh! no," he said.

"You think one's faults part of one's self, like the shape of one's hands or the colour of one's eyes, and that one cannot rid one's self of them."

"No, no, I do not think faults ever actualities, they are ignorances, incapacities"——

"Even cruelty."

"Madness, dreadful madness!" Their eyes were still upon one another's, but both had grown serious.

"Such a theory as you suggest would be terribly, terribly cruel," he added.

"You are an optimist,—science leads us towards my suggestion."

"Ah! no, science finds the meaning of all things, the uses of all things. We abuse her in our ignorance—Heavens! misuse her—it is our stumbling way always to do that."

"I used to be an optimist," she said, as if she had not listened to his last words, and then she laughed.

The youth caught his breath.

"You must be, still."

"No, I have forgotten how to be that too,—here," she added after a moment.

"Who has been frightening you?" he said.

She laughed again.

"All that seriousness," she answered, and she waved a hand towards the advancing figure of Trevor Griffiths.

"Trevor! Ah, you mustn't be frightened of him! He is wonderful! Do you know him very well?"

She paused for a long time, watching with the young man the approach of her lover.

"No," she said at last, "I don't think I know him very well."

"We all grovel to him, you know, and he doesn't in the least grasp why, or even realise that one does. His university has heaped honour on him; everything, everything, was open to him. He comes here and farms. He has the intellect of a Greek—such as one imagines those old giants had—only he is so simple. They hadn't a chance to be that. Whenever they spoke, the world stood round and applauded, or used them violently; they found they were of importance, and that a tub might attract as much honourable respect as a palace. He just is, you know, what with most men has been an affectation."

"I should like to have you praise me."

He coloured.

"You think I over-praise, but when you know him——"

"I shall try to, through you," she said.

The boy observed a rather pathetic look in her eyes, a look that seemed to throw out an entreaty. "Oh! say everything about him you can," and yet she did not really seem interested in their host, but rather in his, Allan's estimate of him.

The others joined them and she linked her arm in that of Lady Anne and strolled towards the house, smiling back at the two men she had left, with an enigmatical expression that perplexed him.

"I wish you would come with me, I can't make up my mind whether——"

He was drawn again by Trevor into farm matters: his interest went quickly enough to them, but the inscrutable, pathetic face of the American girl remained with him as he walked; it rose before his mind's vision and distracted his attention, he could not stop thinking of her, even over the swedes.

He was glad when Trevor led him back to

the house, into the great, delightful room, where he found she was waiting just to say good-bye. "I hope you will come and see me." She spoke with the sweet-mannered assurance that her countrywomen assume on such occasions, and that leaves her English sisters far behind in any competition for graciousness. The American girl is as used to the companionship of men as the other is unused, and used particularly to their paying her homage very openly and directly. The rest of her world takes the matter with the same simplicity, takes for granted the attitude as it were, and pays little heed to the doings of youth, quite sure that young people were meant for one another in all ways. Allan knew of this custom, knew that he would go next day and call, knew that they might spend days of this summer holiday together, and that she would in no way hold him responsible for anything but her amusement. The prospect of an intimacy seemed a

heaven's gift to him. What such opportunity gives the lover to win very quickly his cause, making friendship a possibly beautiful road to wooing, and ridiculous precipitation or trepid caution never necessary, it gives equally for friendship's sake, so that for all the favour, the lover finds himself one of many, and not necessarily the most favoured.

On the morrow when Sabrina opened her window and looked out on to the shining terraces of dewy grass, she saw the figure of the young visitor from Glandon, standing cap in hand looking up at her.

She could not help laughing at the very boyish delight his whole expression betrayed, and the signal absence of any fear that he was intruding.

"Well?" she said, leaning out.

"You said I might come."

"Is this your visit then?"

"Only my first."

"Isn't it rather early?"

"It will be later soon."

"Then you are staying?"

"To breakfast if you will have me?"

"I think I shall send you home and make you come later."

He looked away from her for a moment and scanned the long avenue beneath them, as if he were wondering if he would really have to go and why she was so unkind.

"Do you mind my coming so early? Oughtn't I to have come? You see I am all alone."

"All alone?"

"Trevor went by the seven-forty."

She stood suddenly erect in the window, then she stooped over and picked some honeysuckle from a creeper.

"Did he send you?"

"No," he answered a little mystified, "I returned from the station by the fields. It was so near your house."

"You were trespassing."

"I thought I wouldn't be, by coming to breakfast."

"Ah, you win! I suppose I must come down and give you breakfast." In spite of her assertion she remained standing, twisting the honeysuckle between her fingers.

"But why did he go? and leave you?" she added.

"There is to be a great sale of stock at B——, he thought it was next week and only found out last night that it was to-day, so he caught the early train."

"When is he coming back?"

"To-morrow, I think."

"He did not send any message?"

"No."

"Catch" she said suddenly, and threw the honeysuckle.

Trevor did not return next day. Lady Anne received a wire, stating that Lord Elton had asked him to spend a few days at his place that he might see the results on his farm of scientific methods—that was all.

XVIII.

IT was inevitable that they should spend the days during Trevor's absence together. The thing happened naturally enough, and Lady Anne, who looked on, took no steps to prevent their meeting. It eased her conscience to feel that after all the girl should have a choice even at this last moment.

The good lady found Allan extraordinarily charming, he perpetually won her afresh with his insolent, courageous youth. His command of all the good things of this world, too, awoke in her an instinctive feeling that those who possessed richly, deserved richly to possess; that was, at any rate, how his prosperity affected her. The worldly endowed are apt to seem magnets round which all that is best circulates: the human heart unconsciously clings to the symbol, hastens to follow in the train of success,

and we find that the snob is after all an idealist; but whatever the cause, Allan had won his hostess. She guessed the boy's strait and found it possible to say nothing of Sabrina's ill-fated engagement. Human affairs about her had become like tangled meshes. The boy was in love with Sabrina, and Trevor had absurdly gone away, and wantonly remained away without sending any news of himself to the girl. When, on his return, she blamed him in a moment's passion of contempt, he paced the room restlessly, and then turned suddenly upon her with the explanation that they had yet to save the farm and that for the girl's sake he must not spare his time, even his thoughts——

"Heavens! we have got to make money?"

A tired look came over his face, he fingered a book upon the table without opening it. "Poor child, the thing is all so contemptible."

"What amazing nonsense," she answered, her cold eyes vaguely troubled.

"I do not mean the making money after all our failure, I mean the little right I have to face her, even when that is done, the nothing we have to offer her."

Those days then, during his absence, had been spent by Sabrina and Allan together. The weather was all sunshine and gusts of enticing wind that rustled in the trees and only perceptibly swayed their branches. One had to be out, one had to be idle, if one were sad, one had to laugh, for white clouds in the heavens kept revealing new stretches of blue, and the humming noises of flies and insects, and the continuous clattering of birds interrupted the brooder at every moment and set his soul panting to be physical with the earth and all her life. The heart must frolic through the day at whatever cost, the spirit must yield to her. Sabrina was unhappy enough, unhappy in the way that strong natures are unhappy, with a very wonderful patience.

She was like the young hound that having lost its master raises its head and sniffs the air of new circumstances to find the best way of waiting. An instinct this, traceable throughout nature—earth's wonderful plan to keep her living things courageous through all the struggles, ceasing only at the interruption of the intellect, the dominion of the spirit over the flesh as it were, bringing pessimism in its wake.

She escaped with Allan from the white roads into the meadows, and across country, with the sense that in trespassing, the earth sided with one, and that Pan might yet be surprised if one trode but lightly enough. They came down to new places by the ocean, sheltered bays which it seemed they should not find again, blue inlets of water that were here so calm, flowers trailing down the rocks, pale starry flowers blossoming over the yielding turf that carpeted the rocks even out to sea. Green hills rose precipitously up behind them,

covered with gorse and bracken about the rocky places, and spotted here and there with the black cattle peculiar to the island, dusky spots on a world of green, moving, not more it seemed, than with the lapping of the water or the throbbing of the haze between them.

She was unhappy, but she yielded to the influence of the fragrant warm days and this unaccountable new friendship that had become so quickly intimate and through which she understood nothing but that they both cared immeasurably for Trevor—were drawn together for that reason, the friendship of two out of the love for one, the hand-in-hand understanding as it were. To her this was the vision of those days: he echoed, that was how it seemed to her, the joy of life that was latent in herself, her own natural spirits; he was as it were the boy she would have been. She found herself loving him, as we have said, just because she loved so faithfully and abundantly his friend. A great passion possess-

ing a woman will make her this dangerous thing, an actively loving presence. She desires to give to the world: gratitude becomes a sensuous expression with her, and though as pure as heaven she becomes extraordinarily a temptation.

The unhappy boy, who meanwhile was ignorant of her relations with his friend, basked in the warmth of her mood. The sadness he perceived cross her face at unexpected moments just sufficiently separated them, checked their childish intimacy to affect the mystery of woman's intangible sweetness upon his senses. Their adventures of the day seemed like a dream story that was at moments interrupted by his finding that he had lost her. He repeated to himself constantly, "Ah! how I love her, how I love her; how near we are together. What is this that has happened to me. How happy she is! What am I dreaming? Does she think for one moment of me? If she knew would she not

surely laugh?" His mind went to metaphor. She seemed to be the image of so much beauty about them—She peers through the gauzy atmosphere of night at one, and the day becomes golden for her. Aloud he talked of the farming they were to do, of the wonderful life that was yet to be led when the Prince should turn farmer, and the earth coaxed to produce all the wealth she had to give. He talked of Trevor; he explained that it was he who had made him understand all the peace and dignity of such a life. She listened with shining eyes but she did not speak of him herself. His absence and his not having written to her seemed to have opened a gulf between them that no effort from herself could bridge. They were still engaged and she held to this in mind with a kind of obstinacy that rose to the hope of wings. This was part of the joy she so wonderfully displayed during those days—a surrender to the desired issue in her mind, even whilst she perceived the gulf; yet

from it came a certain sense of shame, staying her from the acknowledgment of a tie that outward events so little revealed. He had not told his greatest friend—was it for her to speak—she sheltered in reticence, and allowed the boy to talk of the man she dared not talk of herself.

On the last day he brought her the news, only towards the evening he told her; they were together on the cliffs not very far from the house; she was seated a little above him and they had both fallen into a silence.

"Trevor is coming home to-morrow," he said.

"You are glad?" She spoke the question seriously. She did not in the least mean it as a challenge. She was looking out to sea and wondering how soon she could have the courage to tell Trevor that their marriage must be broken. The real necessity of it came to her as it always did in his absence, then the strong truth, as it seemed, swept

through her, and she wondered why she so persistently blinded herself, or why it was that when he was with her speaking seemed so absurdly impossible? Allan looked at her for a long time. Had the sadness he perceived suddenly shadow her eyes come to them only then, he might have mistaken it for a regret that their long days together were over. He had however noticed the look before, he had cared so passionately for her at those moments, terribly yearning to serve her, beautifully the strongest desire in youth when he wooes. If only she would take everything in the world from him, if only he might do some impossible service to claim some right to her regard, so that now, though for him an emotion of momentary despair possessed him when he realised that such days as they had spent together could not repeat themselves for all time, he steadied a boyish impulse to fling himself on her compassion, with the feeling that her sadness separated them

suddenly, as if their golden days together had never been: that he had presumed like a ridiculous lout.

She bent her head down towards him. Her beautiful face was very near him

"Are you going to work on the farm then as soon as he comes back?"

He answered mechanically as he watched her face, it was difficult to think of farming.

"Yes, we really are going to work, you know. Up at four; the world is wonderful in the early morning. When one has to rise early for some time, one wonders how it is possible ever not to."

"Why are you going to work like that?"

"The best reason, we like it—but we mean to make the farm pay."

"Two of you?"

"Two of us with a will and knowledge added to the old hands."

"Can two men make a great difference, the whole difference—I don't mean in the ques-

tion of direction or leading, but in the actual work done"

"Enormously."

"Would one woman make an enormous difference?"

He laughed. "One way or another."

There was a silence. She said after some moments, "We shall see nothing of you, then?"

He turned a little pale. "Won't you come sometimes to the fields?" he said.

"With your lunch in a handkerchief, and drink in a tin can?"

Still her face was very near his and she did not seem, any more than himself, to be thinking of what they were saying.

"How beautiful you are!" he said, then at once a kind of fright gathered into the boy's eyes as if his words were some terrible irremediable step towards her disfavour. She would despise him. She would go away; she would move her dear lovely face from sudden

contempt for him, and leave him alone forever; but with this the irresistible impulse to hold her there by him, against her will, if must be, till she would love him, possessed the boy, horrible fear and intrepid courage danced a minuet in his senses, to the quickening of desire.

Sabrina saw him turn pale with some emotion that made her heart beat. In the boy's young face she saw the strong image of love. Her lips parted and her eyes remained on his. She could not dissociate the boy from herself. She did not accept his offering for herself. It seemed to her the love they both felt was part of one emotion, but not for one another: love that was in them came rising to the surface after the wonderful summer day—the influence of the earth, the sap rising from her to them, uniting them in this mutual participation of the great gift. We may not blame her. She never loved Trevor more than at this moment when she caught her breath to

meet the meaning of passion. She loved the boy because her heart was overflowing. The unhappy boy mistook the meaning of her shining eyes. In the tempest of the moment he raised his head and kissed her cheek like a young Cupid frightened at the wrath of the gods for his sacrilege.

She stood up, suddenly erect, a crimson flush swept her face. She turned away from him before he could guess if she were angry, and he dared not follow. He sat quite still, clasping his hands together, and wondering if he could bear any longer the beating of his heart, if so much love were not a terrible pain? The universe seemed to throb with his pulses, forcing them to its own gigantic pace—to keep time were a whirlwind of madness in his veins and yet——

XIX.

THE girl had coloured painfully, and with a startled movement had hastened away. But a stone's throw further along the path the colour went from her face, thoughtfulness superseded emotion to affect her not less physically, so that she had for a moment to stand still, pressing her fingers together as she waited to realise the definite meaning of what had happened: to see mentally the truth of things. She was not angry with Allan, she did not in the least recognise the boy's passion for herself: they both bore a great love for Trevor, this had been their bond. She missed the fact that it had been all on his side, the talk of Trevor, that she had betrayed nothing of her allegiance. She had unhappily taken for granted that he understood at any rate this. He was, too, so young, he was part of the sweet pleasantness

of those days: they had together yielded to a great good-fellowship, to a physical mood with the earth under a warming sun: in an impulsive moment he had kissed her. That *he* had done this seemed nothing in the world to her, only that it had been done, covered her with an overwhelming, un-understanding sense of shame: she experienced a rude dragging of her soul away from pleasantness to pain—the earth grows cold and ugly to the troubled spirit, and the stomach yields up only acid to the tongue. It came in to all her senses with a rush, the very paltry truth of the matter: Trevor had left her to be kissed by another man—a stranger had come and taken from her what was Trevor's, and he did not care. She hurried towards the house and when in sight of it stood still again, the rows of windows, emphasised in the afternoon light—pale reflections from the east—were like staring eyes that had witnessed something shameful; they appeared to face consciously

away from her, blank, spectacled disapproval! and to reflect the thoughts in her mind and speak them back to her. Where had she been? What had she been doing? Her lover was away, he did not think very much of her or he would not have gone; but what would he think now? Well, he had left her to this and he would not care. What was the boy to her? Nothing in the world; yet irrevocably he had come between them, stained their love, and Trevor would not care! She turned away from the house towards the trees which formed a diminutive wood on a precipitous slope; she sped down the uneven ground through the long grass till she came to a hollow like a cup, where the roots of the trees sprawled out from the sides and across the ground almost in a lattice-work, with the brightest emerald moss between them. The sea was visible very far away, and between herself and it a white mist was rising over the plains. She slipped down

among the gnarled roots, and for a moment covered her face with her hands, whilst the hot tide of blood swept through all her veins; wave after wave of shame. A rabbit came out of its hole and peeped at her without any dismay at the still little figure, and a white pheasant strutted past, happy omened among the peasants. When she lifted her head at last and looked across the plains, a sudden chill sense that she was dependent on some other force than her own will crept over her; that her soul might be buffeted, just as the rising mists in the plains beneath, into odd shapes that were no intrinsic expression of themselves, or like the young leaves that were torn off their branches and were sent scurrying in a whirlwind dance that the nature of them took no part in, their very corpses made wantonly to desport. Could one not, then, always do the right, avoid the contemptible, and breathe free air. Was the spirit, after all not free, but capable of

crooked ways, whilst the mind could only look on in dismay? Could shameful circumstances assail those on guard? Must one wake even to the lost illusion of one's self. A sense of impotence held her: of a horrible outside fate circumventing her, so that the earth and the world and the meaning of all things became frightening and fantastic. Solitude seemed the only reality—her own solitude.

She suddenly stood up. If it were this queer island, this old world place that was stealing her spirit? If she went away, sailed back to her country, would she not find her freedom again, the old courage that was the birthright of her countrywomen?

Some time later she entered the house and went to her room. She had the feeling that if she met any one a mark would be seen upon her cheek. Youth is either proud or ashamed of the first assault upon its sex, and in either case the sting of it, however trivial the action, sends the body and soul seeking

solitude to tremble before the new mystery mother earth has revealed either for happiness or pain.

She stopped at the door, seeing some one was there, and hesitated, bewildered at the turmoil within, then she caught her breath and stole on tip-toe to the furthest corner and shrank back into a high-backed old chair that with its protruding sides seemed to protect her from the really devastating scene that was slowly being enacted before her eyes: if she leant quite in the corner of the chair she could shield herself from view of the strange little woman whom she saw squatting in the middle of the floor, a little woman who looked as broad as she was high, and she was not very high. The creature wore fantastic clothes which did not somehow bear any relation to one another, odd things pitched upon her person, as one sees upon a child dressed up for a charade; moreover, they exceeded the usual number. Sabrina

discovered after some moments that she was wearing three bodices of different lengths under her cape. Her face was round and white, and her chins like her bodices were excessive. Suspicious eyes set in the heaviest of lids seemed to be perpetually watching for the ungodly bester: a fascinating, disagreeable countenance which when illumined by any more amiable expression became comical to laughter; her fat lids then winked with the all-but-spoken assurance *we know about that—we are not taken in.* She was in the middle of the floor, and all round her, scattered everywhere in piles, were Sabrina's dresses, gauzy, diaphanous draperies strewn about like petals of flowers cast in heaps. Little satin shoes in all colours, with odd fellows lying heel upwards or entangled in the lace of petticoats. Each shoe brought to the girl's mind remembrances of balls in foreign cities, and gaieties that reflected colour from out of the past, like living flashes

through the shadowy passage of a kaleidoscope. She did not wish for those days back, only their brightness and her own inconsequent happiness in the past seemed a long way from her, and held her pensive; such a life would not give her happiness again, only she had been happy then, and self-confident and proud. She looked wistfully at the gay heaps and caught the owlish glance of the little old woman, who seemed to be appealing to her to settle some argument between herself and Susan. Sabrina remembered that Susan, some days before had pressed upon her the wisdom of selling gowns that had become too shabby to wear, but were of such beautiful material that they would command really a price. Susan had developed an inclination to economise, and an understanding of practical economics that at times upset Sabrina's sense of gravity. All her life she had known nothing of this magic science: she could not grasp Susan's amaz-

ing sums, nor believe in her assurances that actually a fortune was being saved; but the maid's great seriousness over these endeavours, the absolute tyrannising over herself, her father, the housemaid, and Thomas amused the little heiress in her fallen state, and transformed what might have been sordid affairs into exciting comedy, and did not fail to turn the girl's thoughts, which was something of the maid's intention, from despondence.

None of them were ever quite prepared for the restrictions Susan would suddenly enforce upon them. Now Sabrina found all her gowns being sold. "It is always done in this country," the maid had informed her mistress.

"Do you mean in this island?"

"I don't know," she said, "but where there is Society."

"When people get poor?"

"No, Miss Sabrina, when they are rich."

"Sell their clothes!"

Susan looked up, contemplating. It did not sound quite right repeated—sounded as if she had thrown a slur upon the class she had served.

"You see," she explained, "rich beautiful dresses cannot be put on if they are at all faded and spoilt, or marked in any way—the slightest soil and they are worthless, whilst ordinary clothes can be worn when people get poor to the last. They would not be worth selling."

"Like souls," said Sabrina, and she laughed to herself. A great soul may not be forgiven a stain. A common work-a-day soul's sins seem humble in comparison; and as she watched the little old woman she thought, but the other, the angels must hide from the sight of God just as that Witch will thrust my gowns in her horrible sack. "A beautiful soul stained is ridiculous and vulgar," she said out loud.

Susan and the intruder started open-mouthed.

"Oh, go on with your bargaining," said Sabrina.

Yes, they were bargaining, haggling over her beautiful gowns, her slippers and her petticoats. Could she have ever guessed that any one would dare to so depreciate them —"flummery" and then again "*fly-by-night stuff*," "*nothing solid*,"—"*pooh pooh, sequins and pearls*"—"*they won't keep the cold out*" —a fat hand was thrust through a rent in a gauze skirt and she, she was appealed to to admit that this was very damaged goods. The old owl was winking at her, calling on her to depreciate too, her own gowns. The shameless woman offered nothing for her clothes! Why did not Susan turn her out. No, there Susan stood, like a rook watching the antics of some stalking enemy. They were going to begin all anew. The owlish creature raked the bright things about again,

the gold and red and scarlet and white being replaced, changing as it were to green or purple as they were tumbled over. There was a long silence and then the bargaining re-commenced. Really Susan was amazing, the girl felt her sympathy going out to the old owl; Susan was asking, insisting upon five times as much money as the amount offered. They were a shameless pair, but she found herself siding with the owl, siding against her gowns: the old lady was a stranger and really was delightful when she turned her queer eyes to her to be upheld against Susan the unholy "bester." Why shouldn't she give all the bright things to her, they were, as she said, *flummeries.* She sat in her chair however watching the two in silence, wondering which of the two absurdities would win. To her amazement Susan won, won gloriously, she obtained her five times as much, and the little old lady did not even seem angry. She winked up

at Sabrina with a most re-assuring smile, and Sabrina all but ejaculated: You wicked, wicked old woman! And then she saw her things, the bright silk petticoats and the sequin-embroidered coats rolled up indiscriminately into tight little bundles and thrust pell-mell into a sack. Could such a sack hold them all? It seemed impossible, yet one by one they disappeared, literally stuffed in—bundled in, surely to their complete destruction. The sack bulged and bulged, it looked a pig till it grew to the dimensions of a hippopotamus. Everything was in: not a coloured ribbon left! Ought she not to offer to send Susan to help her carry—No, the thing seemed to rise in the air of itself, and the funny little squat woman waddled gaily out of the room with her immense burden on her back. The fairy sack that contained all the bright clothes! They could not keep any one warm; but how many girls would they be divided

among? Would some of those pale factory hands, in the black city from which the old lady had journeyed hither, storm Mother Owl's sack and deck themselves out for the nonce, to please some loutish lover at Yule-tide in bits of her flummeries. She sighed as she looked up at Susan looking at the little heap of money.

"Oh! Susan," she murmured, "you will be able to buy yourself at least a bonnet with that pile."

XX.

"BECAUSE, Miss Margaret, I care for her."

They were sitting in that part of the field which overlooked the sea just below the terrace of little houses where Margaret lived. She had returned from her visit to the mountains, and Allan somehow seemed to be waiting for her. He was restless, hardly himself. He did not say much, and yet evidently wanted to be with her. She guessed it was Sabrina who had blessed the boy with such a mood, guessed things had gone just as she knew they must when she had left a few days ago; nevertheless, she found herself a little angry with Allan. She thought he should not make a fuss, that he ought to hold himself in, a little better, since his greatest friend, the man for whom he boasted almost a worship, was concerned. She had dreamt he was made of

finer stuff. She had counted upon his being loyal. He should have been loyal. Was not friendship of more account than this absurd love-sickness for a pretty girl beautifully dressed. She knew that Sabrina was more than that, knew that in her own heart she championed her against Trevor, but in relation to Allan, that was what it meant—disloyalty to his friend for so many coloured ribbons and soft curls. He knew nothing really of Sabrina, but that outward aspect of her—four days' dalliance, and he found it possible to think of betraying his friend, yet this frank, "because I care for her, Miss Margaret," without any shamefacedness, brought Margaret to the sudden dismaying conclusion that the boy was still ignorant of Trevor's engagement. Surely that was impossible—he must somehow have heard, if only from Lady Anne. The girl looked up at him questioningly.

"Is it quite fair?" she said at last.

"Fair?" he repeated, with a puzzled look in his eyes.

"He is your friend," she said.

"What do you mean? who is my friend?"

"Don't you know even yet, then?"

"What? What don't I know?"

Margaret looked miserably about her. What were they all doing? What, in the name of the saints, was Lady Anne doing?

"Don't you know," she said, "that Miss Fairchild is engaged to Trevor?"

The boy turned white.

"Trevor!" he repeated. Unutterable bewilderment, with a rising shame, held him stammering.

"Yes, Trevor; they have been engaged a year. I thought you knew. It is inconceivable that you should not know."

"You thought me a blackguard, Miss Margaret. Ah! but it is impossible. I cannot believe it. He never told me. Why should he not have told me, and she——"

"Perhaps she thought you knew."

"She could not have thought that."

"If he had not told you, she could not very well—you were his friend, not hers."

"It cannot be true," he repeated.

"It is true, Allan."

He stared at her a long time.

"Good God! What have I done?" he said. "Oh! it is awful. Why didn't he tell me? Can't you see, Miss Margaret, how dreadful it is?"

"That was what I meant."

"Did you think I was low enough, knowing that, to—to——? Oh! it is awful," he reiterated.

"Of course, I could not understand."

"But she, she is wicked!" He stood up.

"Does she care for you, then?"

"Care! God in Heaven, I thought so! Imagine, while he was away, I, his guest, should do that. Of course, she doesn't care for me. How could she?—why didn't I

guess?" He stared miserably down at Margaret. "I loved him better than any one in the world, and then I loved her." He turned abruptly away. "Why didn't some one tell me?" he said, as he went, "you?"

Margaret got up slowly and followed him at a distance. Her kind brown eyes looked troubled; she thought of the things she ought to go in and do; she thought of Lady Anne and Sabrina and Trevor; all the new schemes for farming, and then of the miserable boy striding away from her. They came out of the field on to the shoulder of the cliffs, he dipped suddenly out of her sight. She followed on. Wouldn't it be better after all, if Trevor did back out? She stopped for a moment and looked out to sea. Why was it so difficult to accept any idea of Sabrina leaving them, of Trevor not marrying her? Engagements were broken every day. She stood still, trying to find the thread of the matter through all the strange

circumstances; and out beyond an imagined horizon, as it were, she somehow perceived that Sabrina and Trevor must *not* be separated; that however natural it might be that this boy and Sabrina should come together, however logical that they should care, the thing would never happen. Common sense would not reach the matter; the tragic story must go on, and all she could do was to save Allan as best she could. Whatever were his emotions, whatever, after all, were her own—they themselves were not to count with Sabrina and Trevor; *they* were outside the destinies of these two people. This was the help she might give him—show him that however near he may have thought himself to their beautiful friend, however much he may have conceived he had strode over the circle to intimacy, he was outside.

She followed down the path that dipped into a great, green hollow between the rising hills; the boy had thrown himself on the

ground, near the side of a piece of rock, the shadow of which sheltered him at first from sight; she had to peer before quite seeing him. Then she sat down and waited, not very far from his side.

XXI

SABRINA had wandered into the dining-room in a restless mood, hardly conscious, her tired brain seeking even the trivial distraction of taking stock of the aspect of a room that she was not used to sit in. The view of the long table, without a white cloth or glass and silver upon it; the inhospitable chairs, with their seats thrust under it; the atmosphere of silence that waited the festival of the board before it could decently be broken,—acted peacefully upon her senses, lulled her into thinking of them—of the silence, of the gleaming oak table, of the shape of the picture frames, of the moulding of the cornice above them, and the row of chairs, the trivial movement of shadows between the beams of sunlight that slanted through the window as the breeze moved the curtains. It was a

few minutes stolen from the garden, from her father or Susan, who both looked at her as if she were carrying some monster burden upon her shoulders that they ought not to see, and of which they dared not, however willing, relieve her. As if her trouble mattered really at all?—There were men and women suffering enough in a real way: shamed women, and shamed little children; starving women, and starving little children; soldiers horribly suffering in hideous wars raging on two continents, and flesh still flogged for loyalty.

She pushed a chair half out from the table, the furthest end from the door, and sat down, leaning her head in her hands as her eyes roamed inconsequently over the room, shapes and shadows occupying her even to measurements, when the hall bell rang as if pulled by the hand of an angry or very impatient person, and after some talk in the hall, some futile seeking for her in

the drawing-room, Allan stood in the doorway.

"Thomas told me you were here," he said.

There was the whole length of the table between them, neither attempted to shake hands. Sabrina at once saw a change in the boy. Again she saw a reflection in him of her own mood, this time one of unhappiness. He seemed humiliated, and ashamed beyond control, and, more than in herself, there was anger. He could be angry—then he was one degree less humble, less miserable than herself. But why all this had happened to him she could not dream; it seemed uncanny. That's why he rang like that, he is angry . . . and he is miserable.

"What is it, Allan?" she said. She had not before called him by his Christian name, nor had there ever been such tenderness in her voice. The girl was tired and lonely in her own pain; that this good comrade was

unhappy, too, touched her weakness. They were still, somehow, to share their day.

"Why are you so wicked?" he said. He spoke quietly and looked at her as if he really meant her to answer.

The colour flamed to her face, she shielded her eyes with her hand and looked down the long table at him.

"Will you tell me what has happened?" she said rather peremptorily. "Sit down."

He pulled a chair out from the table and sat down with his side towards the girl, he looked away from her as he spoke.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"That you were engaged to him."

She moved her hands.

"You were his great friend," she said slowly, "you were staying in his house. He had not told you. Surely you can see that *I* could not."

"It was not fair. You saw that I," he

was looking steadily away from her, "cared," he said.

"In that way?" she said despondently. "We were such good comrades — weren't we?" she persisted; "and we both loved him—even, even the other day I did not think you were serious. I was not angry—perhaps I should have been, perhaps I am capable of caring a great deal for people in a different way than you mean. I cared for you very much."

"Don't," he said under his breath, "it's hell!"

She tried to cover the moment. "We are used, you know, over there not always to suppose——"

"I know, I know," he interrupted.

"And then——"

"If I had known."

"But we talked of him all the time."

The boy faced her. "You never talked of him."

She could not answer, she thought she had, and looked bewildered. She said at last, "It seemed to me we did nothing else."

"You never talked of him," the boy repeated. "Do you love him then?" he leant over the table towards her. "You must love him, it would be preposterous if you did not."

"Why ask me?"

"Because you seemed to care for me."

"Why should I not care for you. Why should I not love you as much as I elect to—I thought you knew I cared in the great way for him. Love does not shut one's heart up, you know. That idea is an Eastern prejudice." She spoke hotly. She looked extraordinarily beautiful; the boy leant further across the table.

"Sabrina," he said, "what about me? You have tortured me and made me dishonour my friend, the friend whom I loved more than any human soul."

"How have you dishonoured him?"

"Can you not see it?—I was living in his house, accepting his hospitality. When he went away I made love to the woman who was to be his wife. Do you not understand?"

"Well?"

"I kissed you—and you——"

"That was my fault, not yours." She rose from her seat and crossed to the window. The old shame had come back to the girl and her heart beat heavily. She waited, just feeling its throb through her person, unable to speak or move, then at last she turned round. Her face was all in shadow, so that he could not see the waves of colour passing over it. She spoke in a tired voice:

"You must not blame yourself, or think that it matters very much. I did not understand that you cared as you say. I have never for one moment been disloyal to him, nor have you—since you were ignorant of

our engagement. Your great unhappiness is for him. You think you have wronged him. You do not see that in thinking that, you wrong me; but your friend's honour is dearer to you than mine. Don't protest; I am not vain enough to think you care as much for me as you do for him. You say it is different, that a woman—ah! that is the horrible mistake, that is the degradation. The only difference should be an added difference—first you should love us as much and in the same way; but you do not, and English women are content to take the very poor, the very dishonouring passion that is so different from your friendship for a man——"

She returned to her seat and leaning over the table beat her fingers gently on the table, her eyes bent downwards.

"However, you need not be unhappy." She looked up at him suddenly; the cold, resigned misery that met him from her eyes shocked the impassioned boy into forget-

fulness of himself, he half rose from his place.

"He doesn't care, you know."

The boy repeated her words without understanding her. "He doesn't care?"

"No, he doesn't care and every one knows it—my father, his sister, the servants, the tradespeople, and the whole county if you like, for in a country where they know nothing of love, the folk gossip of it—they gossip, gossip, gossip. You can't hurt him, for he doesn't care. He left me to you—and he leaves them to gossip."

"I do not understand anything you are saying. You cannot be speaking of Trevor. You could not speak of him like that."

"You are right—it is awful how we can speak of people we love! Who was the whimsical creature who invented the absurdity that love is blind?"

"*You* are blind in some very hideous way. He asked you to be his wife——"

She interrupted him, "For my money."

"Ah! that is the lie they have invented——"

"Ask him."

Allan laughed bitterly. "No I will not ask him. I should be ashamed."

"How loyal you are!"

"Why not be loyal too?"

The tears flooded suddenly into her eyes. She stared at him.

"Go away. Ah! go away!"

"Forgive me, Miss Sabrina, I did not mean to hurt you—I wanted to help you."

The corners of her mouth trembled. She laughed suddenly. "Forgive you for being loyal—heroically loyal to him. Oh! I don't know that I can. Now good-bye, please."

XXII.

WHEN Sabrina met her lover again, others were present. They seemed to the onlookers like intimate friends. "They are not lovers," a visitor remarked, as she rose on hearing the wheels of her carriage. She was a beautiful lady, perhaps over fifty, with white hair and ermine and a magnificent presence; she had the arrogance that covered a very sweet and kindly nature, and that somehow sets one at ease rather than otherwise. She wore exquisite jewels, and her eyes reminded the observer of those of great ladies in ancient portraits, rather cold, capable of flashing, and slightly prominent, with beautifully shaped lids and brows.

"What do you expect to see?" asked Lady Anne.

"Less of them, my dear, when one calls. Who's Mr. Howard?"

The two women looked at one another.

"Oh, anything you like," her companion answered with a sigh.

"They talk, you know," said her visitor.

"Yes, you talk—all of you."

The good lady laughed. "Not very much," she said, "after all—but you know the girl seems too good for this sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?" persisted her indomitable hostess.

"We will say the talk,—I am not sure your brother deserves her."

"No he doesn't deserve her a bit."

Sabrina successfully avoided at this meeting, at any rate, being left alone with her lover; but even when that happened, when she looked up at him with a dismal effort at challenging his attention to the deplorable business of their affairs, when her heart beat with a desire to fling back to him his word, fear overpowered her. Why should she break the friendship that was between them

yet? There was surely time enough. The difficulty, too, of interrupting what was in fact a happy enough relation seemed insurmountable. She shrank from the violence of an uttered explanation, a natural modesty held her back from this: one may not tell one's lover that the measure of his love is short.

The months passed by and Sabrina said nothing. The little world on that Island, hardly a visible world, for the folk lived far apart and numbered but a few families, continued to gossip, and maliciously to gossip. It was amazing how much they knew to retail to one another. Allan Howard's name was brought into the affair. Trevor was declared to be "backing out" and the American adventuress, it had come to that among the spiteful, was shamefully holding on. A great garden party was given and Sabrina was somehow overlooked; it was asserted that this omission was accidental.

The good lady who had found them hardly

lovers, on hearing of the incident was royally indignant. She had not called on the Fairchilds when the whole island had paid exaggerated attention to the American millionaire. She went now with Lady Anne. Trevor heard of the matter, and his sister spoke to him of the gossip and of the cold shoulder that was being gradually given the girl.

He was incredulous and then indignant. "The amazing snobs!"

"Oh! it's hardly that! It is just the modern English people's indifference to any one who is of no use to them."

"Precisely, they cannot even be snobs with dignity, or consistence, or good manners, —it's incredible. I must go and see Fairchild; I have neglected him! Heavens! he will think——"

"You have neglected Sabrina. You have started the horrible thing."

He did not answer her, but in the after-

noon he went to Mona Lodge. He was extraordinarily gentle with Sabrina and sat a long while with the old man in the garden. He noticed that she was no longer so elegantly dressed, and that there was a little crack in one of her shoes. A feeling of renewed anger swept through him. He mentally went and bought all the pretty shoes he could lay his hands on, and then to Paris in a feverish kind of haste to get her dresses.

Next morning he told Lady Anne that the marriage was to take place on the twenty-fourth. It was to be quiet and no invitations were to be issued.

She turned very pale. "I am glad," she said. "For her sake it is right," her fingers trembled as she turned the pages of her book.

"Or terribly wrong," he said.

* * * * * * * *

Meanwhile Margaret Hughes was waxing more perplexed, more troubled. She had to

rout the gossips, to be loyal to both her friends without any feeling of loyalty to Trevor.

It seemed to her that he was behaving abominably. A storm raged in her honest heart against him. It was not conceivable that he should so lack heart and manliness that he could let the world gossip of his coldness, and blame such a girl for holding him against his will; but with this was a counter condemnation of her, she could not accept her friend's extraordinary attitude. Why did she hold on? Why, by all that was simple, did she not let this reluctant lover go? At last she faced her friend with the question, colouring crimson as she spoke, swaying her massive shoulders and holding her breath at the end with sudden compunction, excusing herself, however, as we do on these occasions, by emphasis of her meaning, a reiteration of her question—as if that might save her from the girl's scorn.

Sabrina turned as white as a piece of paper: her eyes narrowed, and the naturally full lips drew in to thinness. She leant her shoulder against the mantelshelf as a boy would—her back to the fireplace and her hands behind her, and Margaret waited for her to speak with a wondering curiosity that enabled her to lose consciousness of the feeling of diffidence.

"What if I care for him?" said Sabrina.

"You are above that. The more you cared, the less you would wish to hold him against his will."

"You put it plainly."

"My dear Sabrina, I think he's a hound."

"Do you not think it possible that a man may be fine and lovable, and yet fall in the kind of way he did. Is it not rather usual in his class to be assured of the bride's portion before the marriage is solemnised—would it not have been most legitimate and natural for him to withdraw?"

"No," said Margaret stolidly.

"You are romantic."

"I?" said the girl ablaze.

"Yes, and somehow it is the kind of romance that spoils so much that is really beautiful in life. You think Trevor's behaviour was unpardonable, I think it so fine. He has never pretended anything. He is so extraordinarily little of the hypocrite that he bewilders you all. You are not used to honesty."

"Do you propose to marry a man because he is honest about his disregard for you?"

"No, I do not propose to marry him."

Margaret looked blank.

"Why go on then?"

Sabrina suddenly laughed, it was a sad laugh enough, yet unexpectedly there was the ring of humour in it.

"Perhaps I like him more than I love him," she said, "perhaps his companionship is very pleasant; perhaps it might amuse me

to see him come splendidly up to the scratch and to keep for the eve of my wedding day the gift of his liberty. Think of the pleasure of reprieving him at the last moment. Oh! I have had so many lovers—they all wanted my money, you know, but they liked me too. How amusing they were, they used to be in such a hurry to propose. I was fortunate in not caring. With Trevor it has been the same story, only I happened to care, and he happened to be immeasurably their superior—that was hardly his fault, and because of those absurd shabby clothes of his I thought him disinterested; one ought never to pay any attention to peoples' clothes, they invariably belie the inward man." She smiled, "A man, you know is not necessarily fine hearted because he's shabbily dressed, nor a man so very shabby hearted because he is finely dressed."

"You are awful!" said Margaret, "how-

ever, I am glad. He immensely deserves your whip."

"It was not meant for a whip—on the contrary, for a reward."

"For what? for treating you abominably?"

"Oh no, for having the courage to keep his word, and for some wonderful days in that strange mountain. After all one should be grateful. His personality is very charming. How did you escape, Margaret?"

"I?"

"How is it you are not in love with Trevor Griffiths, you who have been with him all these years?"

"My dear Sabrina, I simply care for him more than I can say. There would be something rather foolish about my being in love with him, wouldn't there? That sort of thing isn't part of my business. One doesn't concern one's self in what isn't one's business."

"It is the only business any of us have any rightful concern in—if we can't love, then we just don't matter."

"I don't matter." said Margaret.

"Ah! you English are frightening. My dear girl, do you know that you are beautiful? do you know that you have a heart and a brain worth those of half the girls one meets put together? Do you know that you are the kind of woman a man will worship if you only for a little space of time would think of yourself—count yourself important?"

Margaret laughed, her face seemed to pucker up with humour, mirth danced in and out of her eyes. "Go on, go on—it's refreshing—it's the first time, you know."

"What's the first time?"

"Never mind—at any rate it's splendid, your American idea that we all count, we women, and specially that we are all beautiful. It must be good for the race—it makes you all so cheerful. I do believe our Eng-

land's leaden dulness in her women is after all only caused by the weight of modesty they carry, it paralyses their intentions."

They both laughed rather mirthlessly and fell into a silence. The passage of humour between them had interrupted for a few moments the miserable considerations that were holding them both. The thing had been said, and they both looked blankly at one another now, ruminating on all the consequences that would follow hot-footed on the action the girl had said she must take.

After some time Margaret got up and walked up and down the room swinging her hip every now and then, in the odd way she had, suggesting to Sabrina nothing in the world more than an inarticulate grunt at some special halting-places of her cogitations.

"Whew!" she said suddenly, her friend was not sure whether it was a more violent heave over or an exclamation. "It's a tragedy."

"A comedy," said Sabrina.

Margaret halted again in her walk. "Don't you care then?"

"Not a bit." She turned her white face towards the window, her eyes looked actual indifference.

Margaret gasped, wheeled round, and went off.

XXIII

SABRINA did not wait till the last moment as she had said, the girl was too generous for that; but she waited, as it seemed, to all but the last moment, not in any sense from a desire to see him faithful to the end, but because she could not take the irrevocable step. She could not lose him until she must. During these latter weeks he had been more ostensibly at her service, and a great deal more at Mona Lodge, and she found in this merely a duty on his part which he had realised must be performed; their approaching nuptials necessitated such attention, the nuptials that were never to be. Conscious of her own intentions, the girl was much less shy. She no longer avoided him as she had on their re-meeting after his absence. They were in

no way lovers, so that it was not difficult to drink in for memory's sake, all the words he said, to steal all the time she could to be with him, and on the edge of tragedy to tread her measure of happiness Lovers together, even when they know that separation awaits them, cannot realise the abyss of loneliness that is to be theirs. Palms on palms, pleasure still pricks through the veins even at a good-bye; only when the warm body has gone does the chill of desolation approach the brain in all its magnitude, and awful loneliness steal across the threshold. The girl had not to part with a lover, he had never been that, but still, with the man she loved, who was to have been her husband, and who had been a companion in the fullest sense of that wonderful relationship.

She wrote it, that seemed the simplest way, and sent the note by hand. Hardly an hour passed when she heard the gravel scrunch outside. She was waiting, nursing

hope which she meant in all seriousness to put out at the door. He strode into the house, and into the room where she was sitting, with very little ceremony. It was dusk and she saw in the half light that he was angry. He was outrageously angry. It quickened the passion within herself. She clasped her little white hands in her lap and defied him with blazing eyes.

He threw her note into her lap.

"It is too late," he said.

"Thank Heaven, it is not," said she.

"I refuse to give you back your promise."

"That is a pity, because I shall take it."

"What has happened?"

"Nothing."

"Do you really mean it?"

"I mean it."

He paused a moment.

"Ah! All the same I cannot allow it."

"There has been gossip enough, you think."

"Gossip! I daresay,—what has that to do with us?"

"Nothing," she said quietly. "As you say, what has gossip to do with us. Still, they expect it, you know; so you need not mind, they will not talk very much more."

"I do not understand you, and I will not give in—I will wait."

"No you must not do that—it is to be irrevocably broken now, to-night. It should have been done before. Please, please, I beg you to understand. I am serious." A pleading note had come into her voice, almost a frightened emphasis. It arrested his attention, turned it from what had seemed the truth of the matter to him. He stood still looking at her.

"You wish not to marry me," he said slowly, as if the subject had only then been raised.

She could not answer him. In those few words all the thing came new to her, and her

courage began to fail. The shadows were lengthening in the room and she felt cold. Why did he prolong it, this absurd scene? and yet it would be awful when he really went.

"Isn't it rather late in the day!"

"Yes, I am to blame," she said quickly.

Again he broke into passionate talk: he would not accept her refusal: she was doing an outrageous thing, she was influenced by gossip.

She interrupted him, "I wonder why you are so angry—I haven't any money now, you know."

He stopped his pacing like a creature that is shot aground. She felt frightened at what she had said, he stood so still. In the very dim light she saw the glimmer of his eyes, they looked as if he meant to strike her.

"Money!" he repeated.

She rose to her feet; all the pain she had suffered in the past months, the long months

of her engagement pressed on her senses, forcing revolt.

"Ah! I am not afraid,—tell me, tell me the truth—just the truth—it will be so easy then. Did you not wish to marry me because I was very rich—because you needed my money? Is this not true?"

"It is quite true."

"When I lost all my money did you not feel that you could not give me up because I was poor—and your honour was concerned? You could not desert me."

"Yes, that is true."

It was quite dark now; they stood near one another, passionately angry, passionately unforgiving.

"Ah! it would have been finer to have lied——" She threw the words out into the room, then moved swiftly past him——and out of the door. The hall was in darkness. She crossed to the staircase and went up a few steps. Then she stood still and listened. He

did not come out of the room at once. Should she go back? Should she go and tell him that nothing mattered—only that she loved him; perhaps he would care some day—that she would marry him if he wished. Why not? What if it were degrading. What was degradation to this other awful pain? She listened: minutes seemed to pass. She could not move, yet how she desired to go, how she longed to go back. His footsteps startled her, he was coming now. She could not move. Would he see her in the dark. He would not think of her being there. She held her breath lest he might hear her breathing and know that she was there, yet her inclination was to shout to him. He paused, opened the hall-door and went quietly out. The little slip of the latch, the metallic click, reverberated through the hall, and long years of solitude stretched from out of the sound before her mind's vision. She went on tip-toe up the stairs to her room,

there, too, it was dark. She sat on the edge of her bed and held both her hands against her side. She wondered why one's heart should beat as if really it were making a noise because—because one had been—wise——

XXIV.

SABRINA had shut the door upon her lover as it were, shut herself in because she must save herself from a hateful bargain. She was free and felt a prisoner, as if all the world had closed round her and was closing still to shut her heart up in a perpetual loneliness. The first few days after the strange interview between them, she had been feverishly brave, held her head high, and thrust out the thought of him with courageous audacity many times a day. To be forlorn and lovesick were to be in a contemptible state, to bend to that she highly disdained, but after some time she began to droop: she found that a heart could actually ache, that the physical efforts to quiet a crying spirit, and the spiritual effort to tame rising pulses, combined to play havoc with her will power over body and soul. The

little philosopher wrestled till she was helpless and the look had come into her eyes that Margaret had described as one of vainly waiting.

Six weeks went, elongated grotesquely in their passing to the minds of all those concerned in this comedy that was striding apace to a tragedy. However, rumour of the broken engagement had hardly penetrated the countryside; for once, the scandal lovers had failed to get even an invented story to build their *certain knowledge* upon, and the gossip who had dragged Allan Howard's name in as an added excitement to the shameless story found his insinuations poohpoohed. Howard was seen from early morning till late, working on the land: no one got successfully near enough to note the shadows round his eyes, and the wearied expression of so young a man's whole demeanour, or how he stood up now and then, leaning on his spade and looked passion-

lessly out towards the sea, as if all the universe could hold nothing that mattered to him.

Meanwhile Lady Anne, who had been downcast enough, woke up to the fact that her brother was miserable, her feathers rose and she took heart. Margaret Hughes was amazed at this new mood in her friend, She ceased to talk of Trevor and Sabrina, for the matter seemed to her too bad a case, and Lady Anne's sudden cheerfulness under such dire circumstances some aristocratic obligation, in which good manners demanded from herself to yield an acquiescence. Nevertheless, she could not lift her mind out of despondence. The world seemed topsy-turvey; it had seemed that before, but somehow there had been fighting to be done; now she felt frightened.

It was distressing to see Allan with so much sunshine gone from his face, to see him stay on in their midst, superbly loyal to Trevor.

The only one amongst them who was loyal to him, and the only one to whom it cost anything: he was Spartan. For herself she felt she had been treacherous · not willingly, but somehow treacherous.

"If only one of them would go away for a time," she said to her mother, the little old lady who lived like a nun in the tiny pointed-roofed house and never went beyond her garden, where she tended the growing of cabbages and carrots and early peas as her prototype in England nursed flowers. Lady Anne and Sabrina Fairchild and Allan Howard, or any other of the good folk who were scattered within possible distance of the bay were, to her, excellent persons who did much to brighten her daughter's life, but who, otherwise, seemed to live in a turmoil of ungodly happenings that Margaret related to her in heated moments, and as to the meaning of which she obtained the vaguest notion. Sabrina had appeared in her house

in the days of that young lady's wonderful gowns, and the recluse had thought her like one of her daughter's gay flowers, and actually the prettiest thing she had ever seen. She referred to her at unexpected moments, as if the fragrance of the girl's personality occasionally wafted across her senses and brought a pleasant memory.

"Why should some one go away, Margaret?" she asked.

"Because it's usual—one of them should go abroad; then we might settle down again—but no, they sit in their blankets, as it were, with a Red Indian solemnity that is overwhelming, the despair of vain waiting in their eyes—and yet they wait."

"It must be very bad for their gardens."[1]

"Oh! their gardens are all right!"

"Then I do not see that there is any very great trouble."

[1] Here a garden means a kitchen garden, not a flower garden.

Margaret stared for some moments. "I believe you are right," she said, "it isn't wise to go away, after all, but to stay and trim our vines and grub potatoes till we see clear."

A little later she went out on to the cliff and sitting in a sheltered place stared out to sea, in her blanket as she had named this mood, and for once sadly enough. Now and then the phrase recurred to her. "It must be very bad for their gardens," and she found herself saying, "we only have to mind our gardens." She spent a long idle hour, then the warmth of all the earth round her gradually changed her mood. She rose with a sudden sense of relief, she breathed in deeply the air of a hurrying little breeze that seemed to have risen up out of the land with the gift of the sod's fragrance as it passed. Margaret laughed. Lower down the cliff Allan Howard passed with his spade on his shoulder, she could not see him and

he did not notice her, but as she laughed and the breeze caught him up and passed him, he threw up his head and his step fell into a swing.

Meanwhile at Mona Lodge, while Margaret was brooding, Sabrina stole from the house, wooed by all the light that was outside, down to the hollow in the wood that overlooked the wide reach of country to the sea, and sat in her blanket too, among the gnarled roots and moss turf. Not to think, but to pass the moments till time would be kinder to her. The influence of the earth stole over her as it had over Margaret, the fragrance, the rustling breeze, the sight of a world stretching away to the ocean, played upon her senses. She found herself watching all the movements in the landscape, the shadows of the clouds, the yielding of the crops to a sudden breeze—a silver ripple as it were over the cultivated fields, the slow trailing of the black cattle as they grazed in the meadows,

and with it all the actual vision of a golden light over the great space at her feet: a luminous haze that had its movement too, a throbbing presence interrupted here and there by passing shadows, cool purple spaces in so much gold and green, with the tremulous horizon of blue that meant the great space of the sea in whose very lap all the lands of the world nestled down. And tired as the little girl was, cold at heart, hope quickened suddenly in her. Surely, it was very preposterous to be sad.

A moving figure far below, merely a spot upon the landscape caught her attention. Gradually she perceived it was a man who was striding along. She wondered why he was in such haste. Was there any reason in the world why one should so hurry. She began to hum, then very quietly to sing, as if she were a little afraid to join in chorus with the birds, who were piping full-throated, and all the sweet humming things of the

earth. Her little song did not rise high or very loud, but just filled the cup-like hollow with a soft sound. Two rabbits peeped out of their holes and the white pheasant again strutted past like a little sentinel with an "All's well!"

She stooped to look at a blue flower which was growing in a crevice that wonderfully housed it, and found herself noticing a shadow not far off thrown across what a few moments before had been very sunlit ground indeed. She was surprised, and her eyes moved slowly along it, then she was frightened and could not look up. She tried to continue singing but could not, then she lifted her head a little proudly, so little proudly, and looked, not at the object that threw the shadow but straight past it wilfully by two inches, to the horizon.

"I heard you singing."

"Oh! I was hardly singing."

"I could not make out what it was—the

sound was so slight. I was coming to Mona Lodge."

"You have come out of the way."

"The singing."

"But it wasn't Mona Lodge."

"No, I did not know it was you."

"I wonder why you always tell exactly the truth—sometimes it hurts."

"Then you would believe anything I said?"

"I think," she answered, her eyes were still on the horizon, "I think if you said you were an æsthetic lady, I should have to believe you."

"You seem so happy—" the tone of his voice startled her, but she dared not look at him, "it is rather absurd," he went on, "that I should trouble you, and it does not seem possible to me that you could understand; only I had to come, and just say the whole thing if you will let me!"

XXV.

"THAT first day I fell in love with you. —that is the absurd thing! I fell in love with you when I lifted my eyes from my book and saw you standing in the doorway. I think I felt angry—you seemed so beautiful, one could not accept you—I could not, and I noticed your dress and your hat and feathers, and I thought they were shamefully extravagant. I concluded the effect was through their means and I felt angry again. When I went to fetch my sister, I saw your carriage and horses outside. They were horses which only very wealthy persons drive. My thoughts recurred to your dress, and I understood that you were very rich. I said to myself, 'she is only wealthy.' I went to fetch my sister and I stopped suddenly on my way, and I thought again that you were probably *very rich.*

We came in together and you were gone. I noticed an odd look on my sister's face as she read your card. She flushed. I divined at once that she had expected your visit, and wondered why she had said nothing. I did not guess the reason till some moments afterwards.

"'She is the daughter of a millionaire and an heiress.'

"I had felt she was going to say this. We talked of you for some time, and then of our losses, our hopeless financial position. She said, 'Why shouldn't you marry her?' I knew then she had planned the thing. I was angry and ashamed, I tried to turn the matter into ridicule, but the look in my sister's face dominated me, and I felt the hateful desire leaping in my heart to buy back our lands with your money, to save the old place from the slow ruin that was eating into the very stones. All our lives we had together despised wealth, the wealth that

means accumulated capital, the surplus of other people's labour; now, the ugly temptation met us, and it seemed that I was going to grasp at it. I saw your face peering at me through the halo of your wealth. I did not know then that it was not the money I wanted, that my heart was not beating for the money—the horrible consciousness of the temptation of your gold engulfed all other emotions. You remember you came, *how* often you came! Anne so wonderfully managed that! and I avoided you, but every day I was being tempted, tempted, as I thought, by your money—it was only really because I cared for you. I began to hate your beautiful clothes, which were the index of your wealth and the symbol of my degradation. I felt that you were not beautiful, only beautifully dressed. The nightmare of it all grew as you entangled your individuality in our daily life. I did not believe in my own honesty. I would not accept that I could

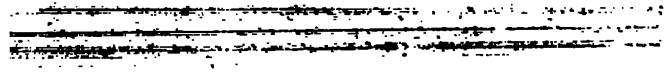
love you—I flouted my desire as a horrible pretence to hide from my own soul that I wanted your money. At last I accepted the situation. I reasoned in favour of the marriage of convenience. I determined to propose to you on that ground. When the thing was done, the old horror came back to me—that I, I, of all men, should have stooped to this miserable traffic. Again, when the idea that I loved you crept into my thoughts, I shrank from it as a contemptible subterfuge from my own ignominy. When I was with you, I could think of nothing but that you were wealthy. When I held your hand, I thought of the money it was to bring, and what I would do with it for my land, and then, because I loved you and did not know, all my senses revolted—you became almost horrible to me; and at those moments when I was happy with you, the thing would flash upon me anew, and I had to leave you, sometimes to

avoid you for days. I determined to end the thing—better anything in the world than this daily humiliation—and even for you—better for her to free her from this hideous bondage; and then your father lost everything, and I knew I was tied irrevocably. She has lost all her money, and now I do not want her, but I must in honour marry her—that is the hell I am to offer my wife. You see it was because I loved you that I so tortured myself into such absurd reasoning—yet I was right. Had you remained rich, I should never have loved you—wealth to an individual always corrodes—nothing lives under its horrible pressure, its biting acid. Its symbol is a shining, beautiful metal; it should be something monstrous, that men and women might know the thing they harbour, the thing they desire. I began to think sordidly of the obligations the marriage would incur; of the beautiful dresses I could not give you; and how all the beauty

they talked of would disappear when you were shabbily dressed. Then, one day, I heard there was gossip, that since your father had lost his money people were less kind to you. I cannot tell you the rage that possessed me. I went at once to you, and found you in the old garden; you had been gardening, and your gown was almost shabby, and you looked pale, but so beautiful. It came to me, then, how much I cared. How I had always cared. How your wealth had been the monster between us. How that we were poor together, but that I was to husband you; then a fear came over me, you had changed—and I felt the awful meaning of it. You avoided me. I saw that you did not care for me any more. It was my fault, and that made it worse to bear. You told me soon afterwards that this was true—I have come now to ask you if you will wait. . ." he stopped abruptly. The girl stirred: she tried to turn her eyes towards

him, but succeeded only in dropping them, then at last with a lightening movement of them upwards, she said under her breath, "I do not want to wait."

He drew suddenly near: there were tears in her eyes. His face was white as he touched her. He paused for a moment, and looked out at the far-lying lands beneath them; bounteous Mother Earth drowsing in the sunshine. The awe of a great passion deepened over his spirit, and his hands trembled as he raised the little white face close to his.



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